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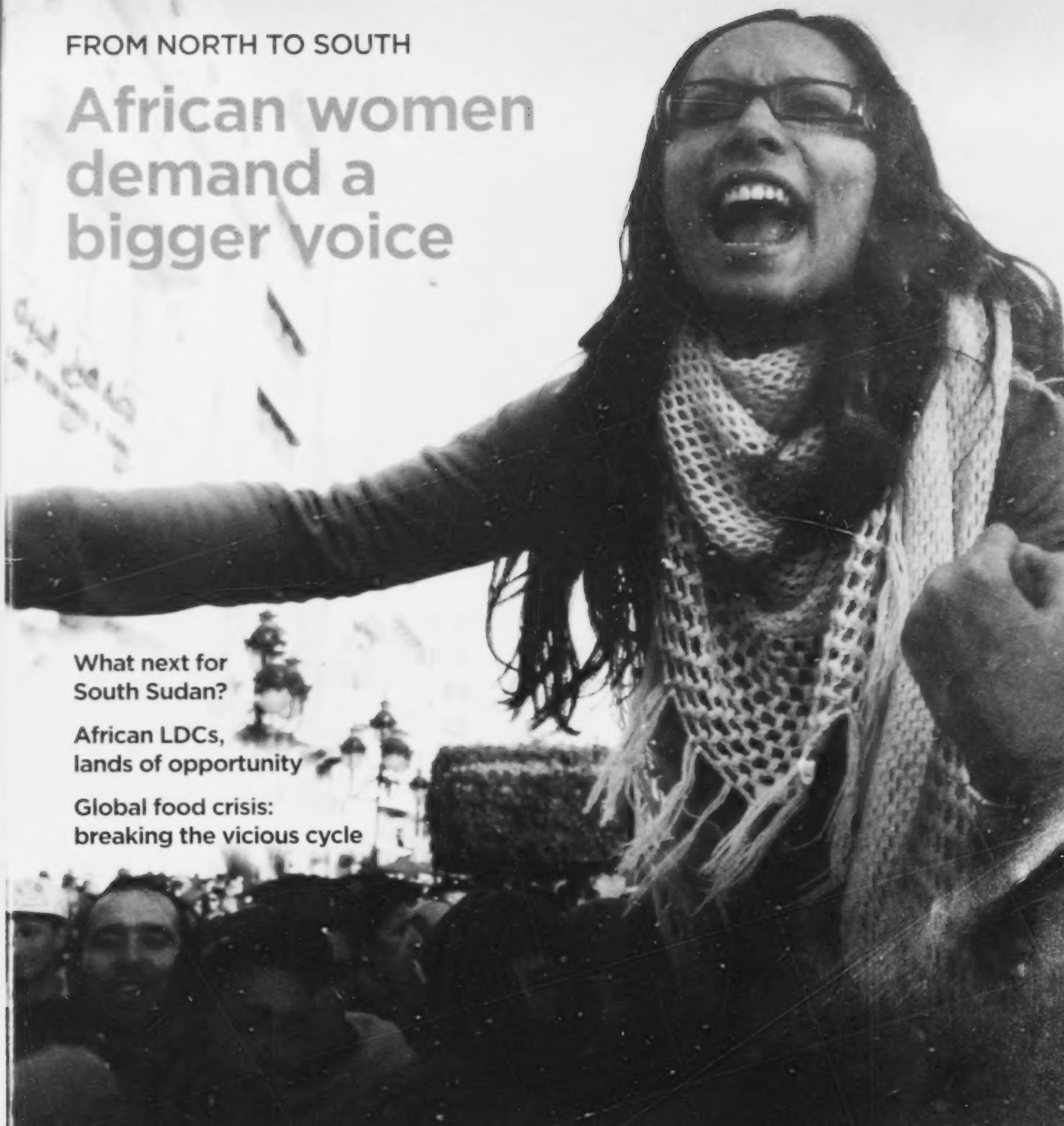
Africa Renewal

United Nations Department of Public Information

FROM NORTH TO SOUTH

African women demand a bigger voice



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Special feature

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Demonstration for women's rights in Tunis, Tunisia. Reuters / Louafi Larbi

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Age Fotostock / Jacob Halaska

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After independence, what next for South Sudan?

Building a new nation amidst dire poverty and the scars of war

By Peter Martell Juba

With a roaring cheer the people of South Sudan welcomed the newest nation in the world. A sea of people waved flags in a blur of colour as the south's flag was hoisted high into the air on 9 July, marking the historic moment of formal independence from former civil war enemies in the north. Couples embraced and men cried as the new national anthem was sung for the first time ever.

"Today is the most important day for the people of South Sudan, the proclamation of whose birth and emergence as a member of the community of world nations you have just witnessed," said President Salva Kiir, speaking in front of a giant crowd. "It is a day which will be forever engraved on our hearts and minds.... We have waited 56 years for this day. It is a dream that has come true."

But the party is over, and now the hard work begins. "Let us celebrate today, but we must get to work right away," President Kiir added. Achieving that dream will be no easy task. The new nation, an area about the size of Spain and Portugal combined, is left in ruins by decades of war.

"We have suffered so much over many long years of fighting," said former child soldier turned student Mabior David. "Our baby nation has a long way to go," he added. "But if we can be left in peace, I'm hopeful we will manage."

Celebrants arriving in Juba for South Sudan's independence day festivities. "We must get to work right away," said President Salva Kiir. © UN Photo / Paul Banks

Challenges

Sudan's wars were the longest running conflict in Africa: two rounds of civil war spanning nearly 40 years, fought over ideology, religion, ethnicity, resources, land and oil. The last round, from 1983 to 2005, left some 2 million people dead and 4 million displaced from their homes.

Some in the south fought for separation. Others wanted Sudan to remain united, aiming to change a ruling regime in Khartoum that they said marginalized the majority. But the rebels also fought amongst themselves, in bitter internecine battles as bloody and as bitter as those fought against government forces.

A referendum on independence was set as part of a 2005 peace deal. When it came this January, almost 99 per cent of southerners who voted in the poll chose to split Africa's largest country into two.

Southerners hope that the wars are now over. But formal independence will not solve overnight the massive problems left by such a long war.

"There are enormous expectations, but also enormous challenges ahead," said Joe Feeney, who heads the UN Development Programme in South

Sudan. "The people of South Sudan have suffered enormously. [The war] left a scar that is not only physical, in the infrastructure, but a scar has been left on the people."

Six nations share a border with South Sudan, which has fewer than 100 kilometres of tarmac roads. "The vast majority of the country remains inaccessible during the rainy season," added Mr. Feeney. "Jonglei state, just one of the 10 states in the south, is twice the size of my country, Ireland, and it has no paved roads."

Statistics are shocking. South Sudan has lucrative oil reserves, but remains one of the most impoverished and least developed countries in the world. The UN's World Food Programme said it helped feed about half the population last year, or some 4 million people.

The UN issues a list of "scary statistics" for visiting journalists: South Sudan has the lowest routine immunization coverage rate in the world. A 15-year-old girl has a higher chance of dying in childbirth than completing school. One out of seven women who become pregnant in the south will probably die from pregnancy-related causes.

In Africa's newest — and one of its poorest — nations, one out of seven women dies from pregnancy-related causes.
UN Photo / Fred Noy

Away fr the celebrations in the capital, Juba, people had little time to party for independence. Much of their lives are taken up with day-to-day survival. "The acid test of success will be what changes the people out in the states will see in their lives as a result of independence," Mr. Feeney said.

"All of Sudan, not just the south, will face major challenges," warns Oxfam, the UK-based aid agency. "It will need long-term support from the international community if there is to be lasting peace and development."

Trappings of a state

Football and basketball teams have been made, passports ordered, a national anthem written and sung. "Having our own team play under the South Sudanese flag is something we have waited for," says Rudolf Andrea, secretary of the South Sudan Football Association. "It is something I never thought would be possible, to show the world we are truly a new nation."

But creating a viable nation will take more work than the symbolic trappings of state alone. The introduction of a new separate currency for the south is just one step, with other major hurdles ahead for the fledgling economy.

Key to the success of the south will be how the government negotiates with those who still threaten the new country, from outside and within. Ethnic rivalries between multiple groups are exasperated by bitter enmities dating from the war. In the past, the north exploited rivalries by backing splinter militias distrustful of the mainstream southern leadership.

Most of the south pulled together during the war in opposition to forces from the north. But now that separation has taken place, the south must unite and find new bonds and create a nation based on a shared identity.

"Is this nation going to be an inclusive nation?" asked Jok Madut Jok, a South Sudanese academic working in the culture ministry, who is also a history professor at Loyola Marymount University in the US state of California. "Or is it going to exercise the double standard that other countries have gone in for — that you become independent and then go ahead and do the exact things that you had rebelled against?"

Ensuring economic growth

Over 2 million southerners have returned home since the 2005 peace agreement was signed. But a new wave of tens of thousands of families are now travelling from the north to south. Over 300,000 people have returned home since last October, with many more expected still to come.

"We have returned home because we had to leave the north, because our jobs were terminated," said former civil service official Giir Thiik, who spent four weeks on a slow barge to Juba. "There is nothing here for me to do, and my money is little. I'm glad to be back in the south, but truthfully, it is a shock."

Building an economy to construct the new nation and provide jobs will put huge pressure on the government. Up to now, many services have been provided by aid agencies and international partners.

The government budget is based almost entirely on oil revenues, as much as 98 per cent in recent years. But there is also other economic potential. The south is believed to hold large mineral and metal deposits. It has vast areas of potential farmland, forestry and even hydroelectric power from the White Nile River.

UN peacekeepers in the disputed territory of Abyei after it was looted by forces supporting the Sudanese government in Khartoum.
UN Photo / Stuart Price

But change must reach the people on the streets and in the villages. "We just want to be able to work and make a life for ourselves," says Mary Okech, a widow with six children, who collects rubbish. "The problems are that there are not good jobs for us, and I don't have the money to make a business on my own. I need help for that."

Violence

Stabilizing peace also remains a real concern. The final steps towards Sudan's divorce have been far from easy. Key deals remain to be struck on a variety of issues: sharing the oil proceeds, dividing the US$35 billion debt and demarcating the borders. Both countries have introduced new currencies, a process that is likely to add complications to their struggling and poorly managed economies.

Despite a peaceful referendum for the south, tensions remain high with the north, after months of violence in the border areas. In May, northern troops took over the contested Abyei region, forcing over 110,000 people to flee into the south. Both north and south claim the flashpoint region of grasslands and farms about the size of Lebanon as theirs. A referendum to determine where it will belong has been blocked, and remains a source of tension between the two sides.

A deal has been struck for northern troops to pull out and Ethiopian peacekeepers to replace them. But that deal still does not provide any means for a long-term peaceful solution.

Then in June violence broke out in the northern oil state of Southern Kordofan, between the northern military and former members of the ex-rebel Sudan People's Liberation Army, now the official southern army. The north claims the fighters there are backed by the south, just as the south accuses the north of backing rebels in its territory to destabilize key oil areas along the still undefined north-south border.

Each side rejects the other's accusations. But analysts say they fear there will be no swift solution to the conflict along the border.

Countdown to South Sudan's independence

1820 Egyptian army under Ottoman Turks invade Sudan, the south's official start date of the "191-year struggle."

1955 Torit Mutiny against British colonial rule, followed by an intermittent bush war.

1 January 1956 Independence of Sudan.

1963 Southern separatist Anyanya rebels step up attacks.

1972 Peace agreement signed between Khartoum and Anyanya rebels, giving the south limited autonomy; but the agreement swiftly crumbles.

1983 Southern army officers rebel in Bor, forming the Sudan People's Liberation Army and sparking the start of the second civil war.

9 January 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement signed to end 21 years of war.

9 January 2011 Week-long South Sudan independence referendum held.

7 February 2011 Final results released: almost 99 per cent vote for separation.

9 July 2011 Independence of South Sudan proclaimed.

'Renewed energy for women's empowerment'

UN WOMEN

Interview with head of UN Women in Southern Africa

Nomcebo Manzini is a busy woman. As the regional director for Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean islands of the UN's recently created Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women — popularly known as UN Women — she is constantly on the road from one country to another, addressing public gatherings, attending conferences and strategizing with government officials and women's activists alike. *Africa Renewal*'s managing editor, Ernest Harsch, was fortunate to catch Ms. Manzini at her home in Johannesburg, South Africa, in late March, during a brief stopover in her travels.

"Women's political representation is absolutely important," says Nomcebo Manzini, head of UN Women for Southern Africa. ☐ Africa Renewal / Ernest Harsch

Africa Renewal: In South Africa and Mozambique, women have reached the benchmark of 30 per cent women's representation in parliament. What's the picture across Southern Africa?

Nomcebo Manzini: As a sub-region we certainly have a long way to go. A few countries have been doing well, but there are others that have regressed. In terms of women in political leadership positions, the average is only 18 per cent. It is way below the 30 per cent we have been calling for, and far below the 50 per cent that the heads of state and government agreed to in signing the Gender and Development Protocol [of the Southern African Development Community, SADC]. We are seeing a lot of change at the local level. Most countries seem to be doing much better in terms of representation in local governments. This might be because women work in the community and are better known at that level.

Women's political representation is absolutely important because participation is a basic human right. Women bring their experiences, knowledge and capacities, which are different from those that men bring.

AR: Beyond getting into office, how can women better engage with broader governance issues, including political conflicts?

NM: One of the things that UN Women is doing is building capacities for women to participate in leadership, but transformative leadership, so that they can engage from a perspective of basic human rights and understand broader governance issues and democracy in general. Some countries are in deep conflict. Our position is to support women to participate in negotiations, in mediation, but also in prevention. In Comoros, for instance, we are working within the context of the UN country team on a peacebuilding project. Our contribution is to build the skills of women to understand the issues of gender relations in peace, in peacebuilding, even in conflicts and how conflicts happen.

Even if they understand that, they need to build allies within the traditional leaderships, amongst men, with their partners, etc. We try to engage a more holistic approach to dealing with such issues.

AR **UN Women coordinates the Africa Unite campaign, which targets violence against women and girls. What is the main challenge?**

NM The problem is the resources. We are not getting enough funds from national budgets or from the donor community. African heads of state launched the campaign in Africa in January 2010. We are now doing advocacy with the different heads of state to ensure that their ministries of planning and finance allocate funds for implementing the national action plans.

We have safer cities programmes that we will be rolling out in several countries, working with UNICEF. Research shows that rape of young girls is normally of school children in the early morning when they are going to school, and in the evening when they are going back home, often through thick bushes and other unsafe pathways. But when we talk to governments about this, they hardly have the resources to provide sanitation and water to communities. They don't see it as a priority.

AR **And the judicial and security systems?**

NM We work with the police, military and other entities in the security sector to make sure they understand the gender dimensions of policing and security, also gender-based violence. We had a conference two weeks ago to talk about how we can support the SADC gender unit to mainstream gender in the SADC Organ on Politics, Defence and Security. We talked about ensuring that the officers who go on peacekeeping missions have some gender training.

Students at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. In many countries, there is now gender parity in the primary schools, but economic and social constraints hinder more girls from moving up to secondary and tertiary education.

Panos / Mikkel Ostergaard

We look also at the informal justice sector. In Southern Africa research clearly shows that when women experience abuse or violence in the home they are not going to the police as a first port of call. They go either to their families or to traditional leadership.

AR **There has been real progress in narrowing the gap between boys and girls entering primary school. But do the girls stay in school?**

NM That is a fundamental point. Looking at many countries, we find that there is parity in terms of entry. In some countries girls are even surpassing boys in entering basic education. But as you move further into the school years and you get into grade seven and eight there are fewer girls continuing in school. Parents are more likely to withdraw the girls from school if they are cash-strapped – or the girls are going to get married. The other problem is that pregnancy in schools is very high and girls will drop to have the babies. Girls also tend to have more work to do in the home, so they have less time to study and therefore tend to have a lower passing rate than the boys.

AR **Southern Africa has the highest HIV prevalence rates in the world. How are women affected?**

NM So much money has come through for programmes against HIV and AIDS. But the work has not taken into account the clear connection between gender inequality and the spread of HIV/AIDS. In some Southern African countries there are 5 per cent of men with HIV, but you find 20 to 22 per

International Women's Day rally in Cape Town, South Africa. More funding is needed for national programmes to combat violence against women and girls.

Photo: Eric Miller

cent of young women of the same age group with HIV.

When you do the research, it is very much: "I didn't want to sleep with him, but he forced me." And then there is the whole issue of "survival sex" in Southern Africa, where young girls will sleep with older men so that they are able to go to school.

AR And women are also more likely than men to be in poverty...

NM It seems as though even our governments have now acknowledged that development is not going to happen without the full involvement and participation of women in the economy. But they have not just all of a sudden become benevolent. It is because of the advocacy that has been coming from the women's movements and from the ministries responsible for women and gender.

At UN Women we are working with five governments in the sub-region in a pilot programme to see exactly what women are doing to get out of poverty. Most of these women are in what is called the informal sector, and their work is not recognized. The women who kept the Zimbabwe economy going at the lowest point in its history are not recognized even today. Yet they ensured the survival of their families and the economy.

> "Even our governments have now acknowledged that development is not going to happen without the full involvement and participation of women."

It is absolutely fundamental to deal with the economic empowerment of women, because we know that when women have that economic independence they are more likely to be able to make decisions about their dignity, their security and their welfare.

AR Does UN Women work with rural women?

NM We have a $33 million project that we are currently fund-raising for as UN Women to do exactly that, to work with rural women, particularly rural women farmers. It is a major challenge. At least 70 per cent of the labour in agriculture is women. When we seek $33 million, that's a drop in the ocean really, it's nothing in terms of the need. And what happens when the $33 million is finished? We need to be able to define programmes that governments include in their own national development plans. And governments must be able to desist from corruption. It is not that the national resources are not there, but they are misused.

AR UN Women has just been created, merging four different UN entities that dealt with women. For women here in Southern Africa, what difference can UN Women make?

NM What I see already is just an amazing amount of renewed energy for women's empowerment in the various areas of work, since the creation of UN Women. Renewed hope indeed that UN Women will do things better and faster in promoting women's rights globally. It is a very tough call for us in UN Women to deliver on that.

I was privileged to be part of the first strategic meeting for UN Women in January this year, when all the different entities came together. You could feel it in the room, the energy. Madam [Michelle] Bachelet is using her diplomatic skills to bring us together. We have been holding consultations with different partners, including the donor community, governments and civil society organizations, to define what should be in our strategic plan. So we continue to be hopeful, and totally energized.

North African women on the barricades

Activists press for freedom, dignity and rights

By Fatma Naib Cairo

Arab women have shown once again that women can often play important roles in revolutionary events. In Egypt and Tunisia they participated in the popular uprisings for democracy — and are continuing to press for progressive changes in their societies — just as they were active in labour strikes in recent years, in some cases even pressuring men to join the strikes.

Fatma Naib, a reporter for the Al Jazeera news network, contributed this article to Africa Renewal.

"The women contributed equally to the revolution, like the men," affirms Emna Ben Jemaa, a Tunisian lecturer and journalist. "We took part in protests in the street, without any discrimination against us."

Women's activism is not a recent development, notes Ms. Jemaa. "For Tunisian women, independence is not something that came with the revolution, it has been there." Before national independence in 1955, Tunisian women faced severe discrimination. They were often taken out of school, forbidden to see male doctors and limited in the political sphere. Yet during this period Tunisian women developed an awareness of their deprivation and began fighting to advance their role in society.

With independence, President Habib Bourguiba played a pivotal part in advancing the role of women.

A "personal status code," adopted in 1956, gave women rights that were unprecedented in the Middle East and the Muslim world. These included the right to vote and to be elected to parliament, to receive wages equal to those of men, to have access to mixed-gender education and to be granted divorces. In 1993 "honour crimes" — in which women were harmed, even killed, by family members for transgressing cultural norms — were criminalized.

As a result, the women's movement in Tunisia is relatively advanced compared to those in other Middle Eastern countries, notes Ms. Jemaa.

Egyptians in Cairo's Tahrir Square celebrate the fall of the Mubarak government, but activists acknowledge the need to continue pressing for human rights and democratic reform.

Associated Press / SIPA / Afrez

This paved the way for Tunisian women's visible involvement in the revolution that toppled President Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali on 14 January and forced him into exile in Saudi Arabia.

"Prior to the revolution, women's issues were not key," she observes. "Freedom and democracy for all is what pushed us to revolt against the regime, as Tunisian men and women, side by side."

'We are still at the beginning'

After the ouster of the president, members of the previously banned Islamist Nahda Party returned to the country. The party will be allowed to take part in Tunisia's elections, but that does not worry Ms. Jemaa.

"People assume that Islamism would interfere with women's rights and freedom. But this is not necessarily correct," she says. "When Islam came to mankind, women used to work and played an active role in society. So I don't understand why people assume that the presence of an Islamist political party will lead to the exclusion of women."

However, Ms. Jemaa admits there are fears of a possible backlasn for women's freedom if the country is ever ruled by a religious party. "People look at the examples of Algeria and Iran. History has proven that there is no guarantee that an Islamic party such as al-Nahda will secure women's rights. Even if they say they are for women's freedom, there is no guarantee they will keep their word on anything after they come into power. This is the case with all politicians."

So Tunisians need to be on guard, she concludes. "In terms of the future, we need a revolution in the way of thinking and in the mentality. Change will not come overnight. In my opinion, we are still at the beginning of the revolution."

Side by side in Tahrir Square

The revolution in Tunisia inspired people in neighbouring Egypt to take to the streets on 25 January to demand freedom and dignity. But even before the uprising, female factory workers had staged major strikes in 2007 in the city of Mahallah.

When this year's protests began in Cairo's Tahrir Square, women accounted for 40 to 50 per cent of the demonstrators during the 18 days that led to the fall of President Hosni Mubarak. Women of all ages, with and without veils, set up barricades, led debates, shouted slogans and, together with the men, risked their lives.

The idea that men and women should behave differently was set aside during the revolution. Nawara Najm, an Egyptian journalist, blogger and human rights activist, recalls how she along with other women fought side by side with the men. "When we had to fight, I fought. When we had to hurl stones, I did. When we had to shout slogans, I did. We did whatever was necessary to achieve our freedom."

On 28 January, dubbed the "day of rage," she and other women helped mobilize the resistance. "When the police clashes intensified and the shooting escalated, some of the guys would retreat. At that point all the women would push to the front. When our male fellow revolutionaries would see us do that, they would return immediately and push to the front with us and overcome their fear. I was on the bridge when the severe fighting took place on that day. I was surrounded by women. We went forward to the front line and seeing us pushed everyone to come."

That day also brought Ms. Najm's worst memory of the revolution, when a person died next to her. "We were on the bridge by the Nile. What upset me was that his death was preventable, but we couldn't call an ambulance. I tried to use my phone, but the lines were cut. Then he shut his eyes. I asked if he was asleep, but another person told me that he had passed away."

But she focuses on the positive memories. "The 25th of January was the best day, because everyone went to the streets thinking that they would be alone. But I was filled with joy when I realized that I was not alone. It was a very emotional moment for me."

"Long live freedom!" declares graffiti in Tunis. Tunisian men and women mobilized side-by-side against the authoritarian regime. Reuters / Louafi Larbi

'No one can stand in the way'

For Ms. Najm, the revolution is still ongoing. "We managed to topple the head of the regime, but the entire regime is not gone yet and our key demands have not been met."

"I am not too worried about the Muslim Brotherhood having political power in Egypt," Ms. Najm adds. "They are a political organization that has the same right as everyone else to participate in the political arena. There is room for everyone in Egypt. All are welcome, and all different voices are allowed. No one can stand in the way of the will of the people anymore. The people have spoken and we have decided to fear no more. No one can silence our will for freedom."

Salma El Tarzi, an Egyptian filmmaker, was also active in the revolution and echoes Ms. Najm's fighting spirit. "I am not into any political parties. I prefer to remain neutral for now. I know I will always be in the 'opposition,' so I am there ready to demonstrate, or fight."

Weeks after Hosni Mubarak stepped down as president and power was transferred to the military, the youth movement continued to gather in Tahrir Square to protest the slow pace of reforms. Ms. Tarzi says there was a sense among protesters that the army had betrayed them.

She speaks in agitated terms about what happened when soldiers cleared Tahrir Square on 9 March: "They violently dispersed the crowd and arrested several activists, including women who had to undergo forced virginity tests. Those who failed the tests and were not married were later charged with prostitution. The police and army used the virginity test as a form of humiliation. The men suffered from different sorts of humiliation. It is just that they did not find means to humiliate men that are as harsh as the tests for the women. I'm sure if they had found something they would."

Women in Cairo calling for equal rights
Fatma Naib

Ms. Tarzi, like other women, continues to protest against the injustices that prevail in post-Mubarak Egypt.

From Algeria to Saudi Arabia

Nabila Ramdani, a French political analyst of Algerian origin, compares the role of women during the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt with that of women in the 1954–62 Algerian independence war. "Women played an important role in the battle for Algerian independence. They planted bombs and acted as informants who would relay information to the fighters. But history didn't give them the place they deserve in society, with an equal status to the men after the war."

Ms. Ramdani believes that religion, culture and law have all contributed to the state of affairs in Algeria today, with certain interpretations of religion posing particular problems for women. In post-revolution Tunisia, Ms. Ramdani adds, the voice of women is louder than in Algeria because it is a secular society, with a distinction between religion and the rule of law.

She is very optimistic about the future, because women are finally speaking up. She notes that this is evident elsewhere in the Arab world, including in countries such as Saudi Arabia and Yemen. In Saudi Arabia, where women are banned from driving, several women drivers have posted videos online showing themselves defying the ban. "It was previously unthinkable that women there would defy the king by getting into their cars and driving," comments Ms. Ramdani.

"I am positive about the future for women in the Middle East," she says. "The fear barrier has been broken. Fear was a major hindrance and it is gone forever." The wind of revolt that is sweeping across the Arab countries has led people to realize that change is possible.

Women in different parts of the region face different challenges. While some countries have accomplished more, it seems that what women across the Arab world want is for their voices to be heard. They want their basic human rights to be respected in societies that are free and fair for all.

'Arab Spring' stirs African hopes and anxieties

Will popular upsurge in the north help spur reform south of the Sahara?

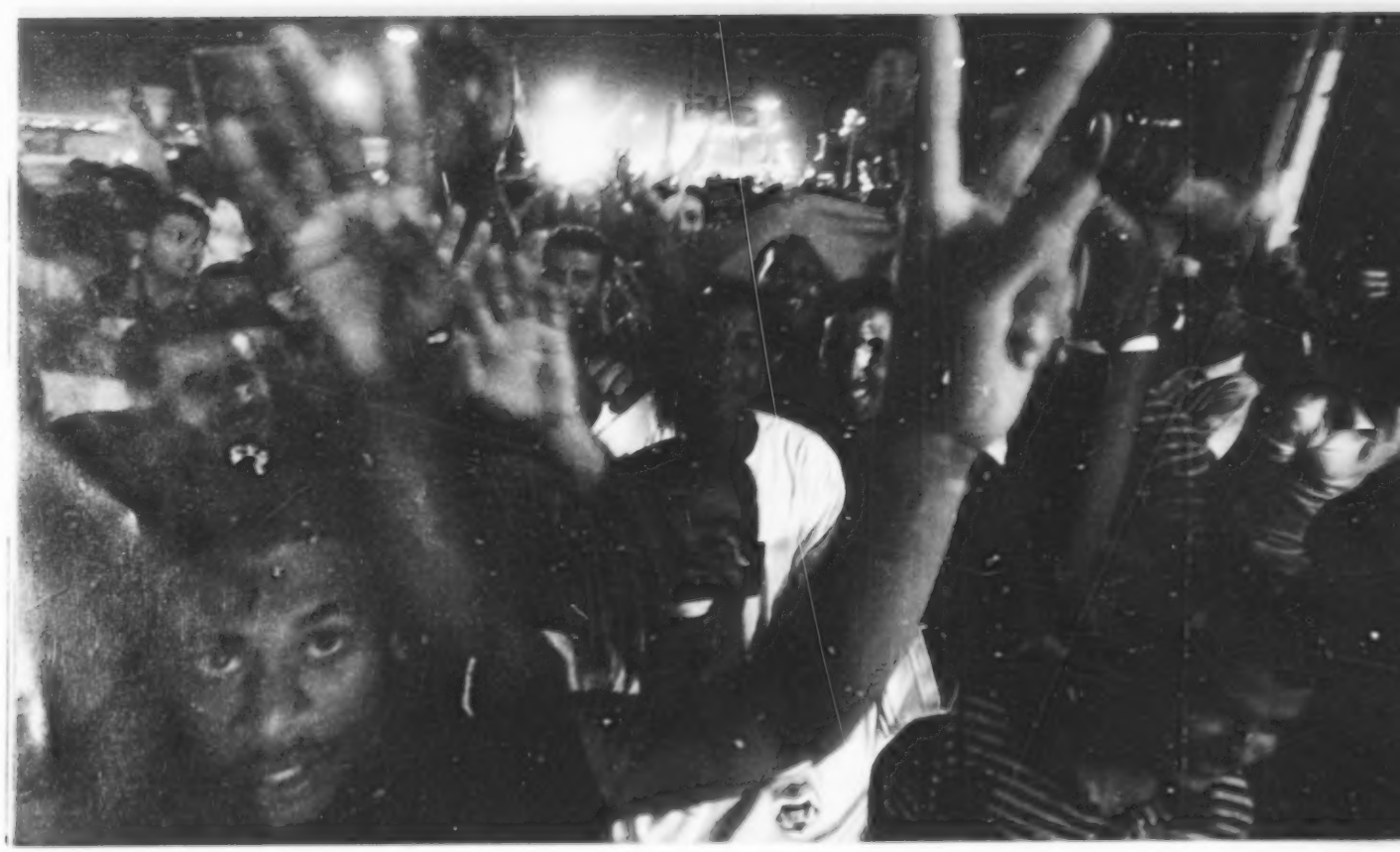
By Ernest Harsch

As the "Arab Spring" of mass protests for democracy that is roiling much of North Africa and the Middle East slips past mid-year, activists and power holders across Africa continue to follow the unfolding revolutions – and ponder their impact on other parts of the continent.

In Africa's remaining autocratic states, young activists armed with enthusiasm and laptops are trying, with mixed results, to emulate the breakthroughs achieved by their colleagues in Tunisia and Egypt. In a number of other countries citizens watch the massive peopl.'s movements of the Arab world with great sympathy – but are thankful they do not need to take similar risks because their own political systems are now sufficiently open to allow them some voice.

Whatever the differences among countries, the basic problems highlighted by the North African revolutions are similar: high youth unemployment, rising food and fuel costs, persistent corruption, denial of basic rights and limited participation in decision-making. Addressing African countries in late May, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon reminded them that in North Africa it was a lack of freedoms "that led young people to take to the streets demanding change and fulfilment of their legitimate aspirations for better lives." The message is clear, he added: ensure "sustainable political progress."

Jean Ping, chairperson of the African Union Commission, gave the same message to the continent's assembled leaders at the 30 June opening of the AU summit in Malabo, Equatorial



Sudanese and Egyptian residents in Khartoum, Sudan, celebrated the downfall of the Mubarak government in neighbouring Egypt.

Reuters / Mohamed Nureldin Abdallah

Guinea. While hailing the changes in Tunisia and Egypt as a "new advance" in Africa's decades-long march towards democracy, he urged all African governments to see "the popular uprisings" as an occasion to recommit themselves to the AU's democracy agenda.

While few African leaders have themselves been so welcoming of the Arab Spring, Mr. Ping did reflect the widespread sentiment of pro-democracy and human rights advocates across the continent. As well-known Kenyan human rights activist Wangari Maathai declared in March, "A wind is blowing. It is heading south, and won't be suppressed forever."

Fanning the sparks

Shortly after the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt captured international headlines, groups of militants in several sub-Saharan countries tried to follow those examples. In Sudan, protest calls over Facebook brought hundreds of students into the streets of Khartoum and other towns, although they were quickly dispersed by riot police. Thousands demonstrated in Djibouti in January and February to demand ouster of the incumbent president. In March small pro-democracy protests organized over the Internet were held in Luanda, Angola, but were broken up by security forces.

In Gabon, Nigeria and elsewhere, opposition leaders, trade unionists and other critics frequently spiced their public declarations with North African references, either to encourage their supporters or to frighten the authorities.

Echoes of the northern revolutions featured in several larger-scale movements. In late February students in the Burkina Faso city of Koudougou protested the death of a fellow student following police beatings, chanting "Tunisia is in Koudougou!" and "Burkina will have its Egypt!" Their actions spread nationally and contributed to a succession of labour strikes, merchants' demonstrations and army mutinies that began to wind down only in early June.

Protesters in Swaziland, partly inspired by the North African revolutions, calling for political reforms in their Southern African kingdom. Reuters / Siphiwe Sibeko

In Swaziland, online calls brought thousands of students and unionists out for pro-democracy rallies in various towns in April. Activists were motivated by long-standing local grievances, but also cited the inspiration of North Africa.

In Senegal, the government introduced parliamentary legislation that would have lowered the threshold for victory in next year's presidential election from more than 50 per cent in the first round to just 25 per cent. An alliance of civic organizations and opposition parties promptly organized large, boisterous protests in Dakar and other cities on 23 June. Within hours the president reversed his position and withdrew the bill. "This proves once again that the mobilization of the people is a formidable source of democracy," declared one opposition leader. "The African Spring will begin here in Senegal," said another.

Electoral alternatives

Despite such rhetoric, the events in Senegal point to a key difference from the political situation that prevailed in much of the Arab world. Senegal, like numerous other sub-Saharan countries, already has a functioning democratic system, and organized political forces ready to defend it. By contrast, the authoritarian rulers of Tunisia, Egypt, Syria, Libya, Yemen and other countries tried to dig in their heels against popular demands for democratic reform — and ended up provoking revolutionary responses.

Thanks to popular pro-democracy movements in the 1990s, most military and one-party regimes were pushed aside in sub-Saharan Africa. A big majority of states now have regular multiparty elections. A dozen presidential contests were held in 2010, and 17 are scheduled this year (see page 15). While some of these systems still fall far short of accepted democratic norms, in quite a few countries elections do offer alternative avenues for political change and expression of grievances. As a result, while citizens may still take inspiration from events in the north, they see less need for confrontational methods.

"For the most part in recent times, we Africans have taken our requests for democracy to the polls, not

Job seekers waiting alongside a road in Cape Town, South Africa. Inclusive economic growth and job creation must be priorities for all African countries.
Reuters / Mike Hutchings

the streets," noted John Dramani Mahama, vice-president of Ghana, in a commentary about the Egyptian upsurge. Mr. Mahama added, however, that in some African countries elections have "not resulted in any real change. And ultimately, that is what sparks all revolutions: the urgent, non-negotiable need for sustainable change."

Fear of strife

A number of Africa's more authoritarian governments have shown repeatedly that they are willing to resort to severe repression to stave off challenges. Several reacted in alarm at the first hints that some of their citizens might draw encouragement from events elsewhere. In Zimbabwe, a former member of parliament and five others were charged with subversion after a meeting featured videos of protests in Tunisia and Egypt. A journalist in Ethiopia was threatened by police for commenting on North Africa.

In Malawi a lecturer was questioned for referring to the Egyptian uprising, while a number of demonstrators protesting high prices were killed by police in late July.

Under repressive conditions, public challenges can be very risky. And even if a government fails to halt them, the result may not necessarily be a democratic opening, some commentators have noted. There could be a descent into civil war, as happened in recent decades in Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the Arab world itself, the spread of unrest from Tunisia and Egypt to Syria, Yemen and elsewhere has sometimes taken a more violent turn — and in Libya and Bahrain led to external intervention — tarnishing the initially peaceful image of the Arab Spring. "What we are witnessing in Libya is the more natural outcome of Africa's sectarian, violent and corrupt politics," Kenyan newspaper editor Charles Onyango-Obbo said. "What happened in Tunisia and Egypt now seems to have been a fluke."

He and others have pointed to Africa's highly diverse ethnic landscape as one factor that can feed into sectarian strife, with Ms. Maathai observing that in sub-Saharan Africa, "movements are extremely susceptible to hijack because of its internal diversity."

Overcoming hurdles

While fear and social divisions may complicate the development of reform movements, they are not insurmountable, analysts note. For years, many Arab countries were also marked by widespread fear, as well as by ethnic, religious, clan and other cleavages. But those divisions were bridged, at least for a time, during the height of the popular movements, just as they were in sub-Saharan Africa during the anti-colonial struggles and the pro-democracy movements of the 1990s.

Freer flows of information can help. Many reports on the northern revolutions noted how activists used social media and other online technologies to call and build support for protests (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2011). However, in sub-Saharan Africa, argues William Gumede, programme director of the Africa Asia Centre at the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies, access to the Internet and to social media is not as widespread. But Internet use is growing rapidly, especially through mobile technologies. "If a revolution is unlikely to arrive in most African countries south of the Sahara via the Internet," says Mr. Gumede, "it may arrive via the mobile phone."

Others argue that however helpful such technologies may be in speeding communications and frustrating censorship, the extent of civil organization may be more decisive. "The most significant political movements in Africa and in other places have occurred independently of social media — the struggles for independence, the struggles against apartheid and racism in Southern Africa," argues Nanjala Nyabola, a Kenyan political analyst at the University of Oxford. "Where people need or desire to be organized they will do [sc] independently of the technology around them."

Nigerian blogger and social justice activist Sokari Ekine agrees. "The strength of trade unions and student movements," she says, can greatly affect "the willingness to persevere not for days, but for weeks on end."

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African elections: works in progress

Counting votes after the 2006 election in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While some post-war elections help entrench democracy, others may mark a continuation of "war by other means."

UN Photo / Kevin Jordan

Trends are encouraging, but some polls still fall short

By André-Michel Essoungou

Until two decades ago football games were arguably the most heated contests in most of Africa, sometimes stirring disputes for months. Then came the era of competitive elections. From the beginning, the electoral game topped the charts. And much like football amateurs would tell you about the many games they watch, some elections deserve good grades, others merit bad ones, most lie in the middle. Twenty years into the continent's era of multiparty elections, with around 60 legislative, presidential and other contests taking place in Africa this year alone, such diverse trends persist.

In March Benin held its fifth round of competitive national elections since 1991. The incumbent president, Yayi Boni, won a second term in office and his party maintained its dominance in parliament. Despite claims of vote-rigging by some opposition leaders, observers say the race was fair. Much as in Ghana, Mali, Senegal, Mauritius, Botswana and South Africa, elections in the tiny West African nation, once prone to military coups, have come to embody the best trend on the continent.

These countries have many things in common, including an active

civil society, a vibrant and free press, an independent electoral body, a competitive political landscape and a widely shared respect for the rule of law (see box below). Rarely do violent protests precede or follow the proclamation of election results. Peaceful handovers of power following an opposition victory are not uncommon. "These political systems are a result of a long and negotiated compromise among the elites," observes Achille Mbembe, a political scientist at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Perpetuating strongmen

Other elections, however, point to a different trend. True to the words of a former president of the Republic of Congo, Pascal Lissouba, who once professed that "one does not organize elections to end up on the losing side," such contests are mainly window-dressing exercises aimed at legitimizing the status quo. They often occur in countries where the same leaders have been in power for a decade or more. Just months ago, before popular uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt ousted strongmen from office, most elections in North Africa belonged in this category.

There are currently some 10 countries in sub-Sahara Africa with leaders who have been in power for more than 20 years, says Almamy Cyllah, the Africa director for the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), a think-tank based in Washington, DC. These leaders' electoral victories are achieved in various ways, including "by suppressing or banning opposition parties, acting in such a way that opposition parties boycott the election altogether, monopolizing state resources or media, intimidating voters or conducting outright fraud."

Such scenarios will probably be repeated in upcoming elections. "In all likelihood, most of these countries will not experience political change or viable elections in the near future – perhaps not until the death of their current rulers and possibly not even then," Mr. Cyllah told *Africa Renewal*. In such countries, adds Mr. Mbembe, "The rulers and their supporters have been able to control the pace of change. They have designed the rules to maintain their grip on the state and the economy, while allowing insignificant reforms."

The struggling majority

In the grey area between these two extremes lie a majority of African elections. Nigeria's latest round of voting, in April, although tainted by all-too-familiar instances of fraud and violence in a few regions, won some praise. Analysts maintain that the election that saw a victory for President Goodluck Jonathan was the cleanest the country has ever seen. Months earlier, in Guinea, 52 years of dictatorship came to an end with an election that appeared unlikely until it finally took place. Alpha Condé, a veteran opposition leader, won the presidential race to become Guinea's first democratically elected leader since independence.

In these two cases, as in many more across Africa, some of the vital elements required for a free and fair contest were missing. Long histories of vote-rigging, a lack of institutional experience and the weakness of the free and independent media continuously threatened the processes. Yet

Designing credible elections

Debates about elections in Africa are as common as elections themselves. For years, many meetings, seminars and conferences have been held with the aim of identifying the crucial ingredients for credible polls, including some organized by UN programmes and agencies. These have identified a number of best practices, drawing on both exemplary elections and more challenging cases. There seems to be general agreement about the factors that can help produce credible elections.

- Chief among these is the establishment of a truly independent and impartial electoral commission. Such an institution can act as a referee during elections and its independence and impartiality can enhance citizen confidence in the process. Commissions should act in a transparent manner and engage with all actors involved in elections.
- In addition, non-partisan domestic and foreign election observers can provide an impartial assessment of the electoral process, further helping citizens assess its legitimacy.
- The media should be able to provide balanced coverage of all candidates and parties.
- Civil society groups should be active in issues ranging from voter education to the promotion of election dialogue and initiatives to defuse conflicts.
- Throughout the electoral process, security personnel must remain neutral.
- Competing political parties and candidates must show willingness to conduct themselves peacefully and fairly. Incumbent leaders must set a tone of tolerance and respect for the election process.

When many or all of these elements are in place they can help set the stage for elections that are inclusive, transparent and accountable to citizens. Where these standards are met, analysts argue, the public is likely to have confidence in the election process and outcome.

the determination of certain key actors (including, in the case of Nigeria, the head of the national electoral commission) helped achieve a breakthrough.

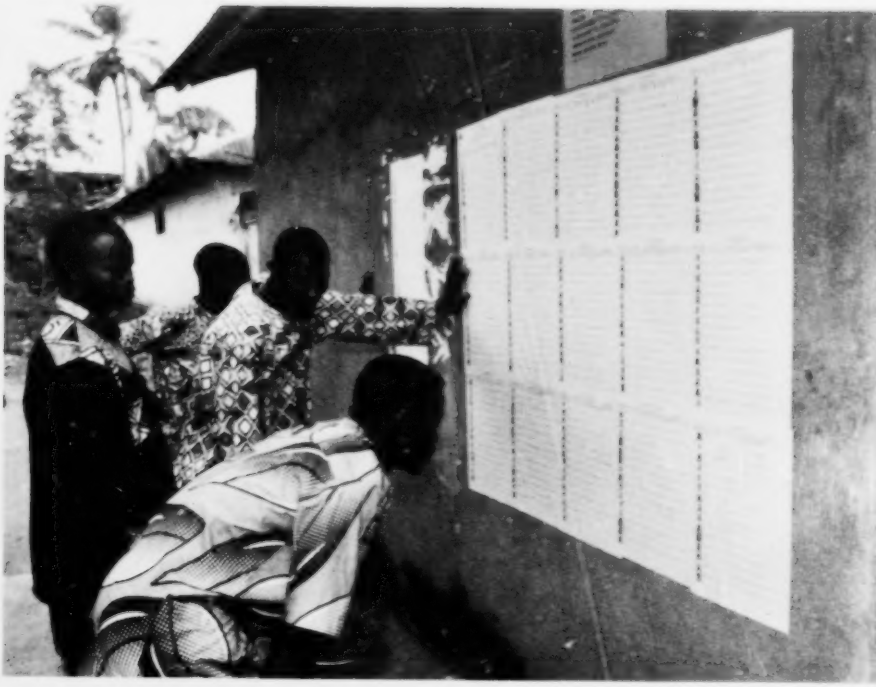
"Now what this category of countries needs is to build on the gains they've made in such difficult circumstances," urges Akinyemi Adegbola, an expert in electoral assistance at the UN Department of Political Affairs in New York.

Given the many weaknesses of these countries' systems, the fierce competition that often marks their elections can sometimes lead to unrest and violent conflicts. "Competitive elections have not always turned out well in Africa," remarks Mwangi Kimenyi, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, a US think-tank. "In Kenya, Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire, elections have tended to weaken the institution, with claims of rigged and stolen elections," he argues. "In these and other cases, elections have actually further polarized ethnic groups and led to violent conflicts."

After war

The grey middle ground is also populated by elections held soon after the end of civil wars. In the past decade, as many African conflicts have drawn to a close (see *Africa Renewal*, December 2010), several post-conflict elections have taken place. So far the results have been mixed. While such elections are helping entrench democracy in Liberia and Sierra Leone, they were followed by a return to war in Angola in 1992. Most recently, in Côte d'Ivoire's November 2010 elections, disputes over the results led to some of the worst killings and human rights violations in the nine-year war that has crippled the country.

In other countries emerging from war, elections have legitimized the winning side in that war and marked "the continuation of the war by other means," comments Mr. Mbembe.



Voters look for their names on voter registration lists outside a polling station in Benin. Once prone to coups, Benin now has regular elections that are widely considered transparent and fair.

Associated Press / Valentin Sakko

Elections after wars pose unique challenges. Countries emerging from war "must first seek to create prerequisites for democracy, including full demilitarization, an appropriate electoral system and a competent electoral administration," argues Michael Eiseman of the Electoral Institute for the Sustainability of Democracy in Africa, based in South Africa.

A process, not an event

Despite the difficulties, the fact that competitive elections are no longer rare in Africa is a positive development. "They have given many Africans, who for a long time were under oppressive dictatorships, the opportunity to elect leaders that represent the needs of the African citizens and prioritize development goals," says Mr. Kimenyi of the Brookings Institution.

Yet Mr. Mbembe of the University of the Witwatersrand has regrets: "Elections have become the most direct trigger of violence in Africa. Far too often, they divide people and cause destruction of lives and properties." True, concedes Mr. Cyllah, "Elections are often marred by fraud or incompetence and do sometimes result in violence." But, he insists, "No other means have brought about non-violent transitions of power with the same consistency."

Efforts are under way to improve electoral contests across the continent. Over the past decade in particular, independent electoral commissions have become a standard feature, remarks Mr. Adegbola. The UN Development Programme and international non-governmental organizations have been supporting the creation of such commissions. They have also trained local observers, assisted in voter registration, vote monitoring and tallying, and worked with civil society groups. Likewise, donor countries have helped finance many recent elections in Africa.

Improving electoral processes is vital, emphasizes Mr. Kimenyi. "The source of problems in recent disputed elections in Africa has been weaknesses in the electoral processes," he says. However, argues Chris Hennemeyer, an

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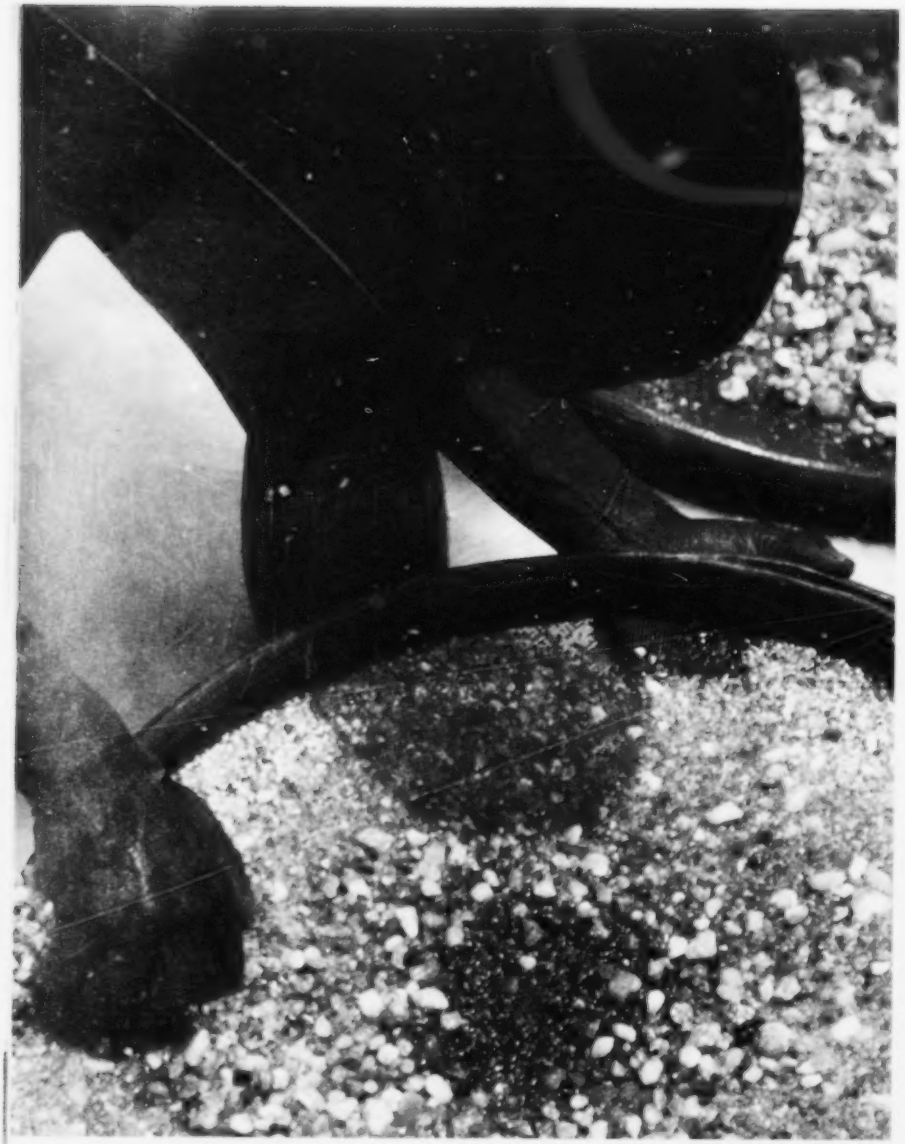


Panning for diamonds: Sierra Leone's rich natural resources can help spur economic growth, but amidst widespread poverty, managing that wealth will be vital.
Age Fotostock / Deloche

Peace in Sierra Leone, a project under construction

UN seeks to coordinate support for post-war development

By **Kingsley Ighobor** and **Michael Fleshman**

"The war is over, go and enjoy life," Sierra Leone's former president, Ahmad Tejan Kabbah, declared at a January 2002 symbolic burning of weapons and ammunition to mark the end of the country's civil war. As thick smoke from the weapons of war spiralled away at Lungi, in eastern Sierra Leone, he added: "The curfew is hereby lifted." Thousands of jubilant Sierra Leoneans filled the streets to celebrate the formal interment of a decade-old war that had killed 150,000 people and wrecked most of the country's social infrastructure.

A massive UN peacekeeping operation involving 17,000 troops (at the time, the largest in the world) had disarmed 45,000 combatants, including 6,774 child soldiers. In 2006, UN troops began to withdraw, despite concerns that Sierra Leone's weak national institutions could not undertake the huge task of reconstruction on their own. The UN Security Council referred these concerns to the new UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC). Then in December 2006 the PBC approved $35 million to support programmes in Sierra Leone for capacity building, democracy, good governance, justice, security, youth employment and other tasks.

Sierra Leone was one of the commission's first beneficiaries. Established by the Security Council in December 2005, the PBC has a mandate to coordinate with international donors, financial institutions, governments and troop-contributing countries in helping to "marshal resources" and develop "integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery." The commission is also expected to highlight any "gaps that threaten to undermine peace." It currently supports nearly 100 projects in 15 countries.

'Access to opportunities'

Countries that are emerging from conflict need peacebuilding, argues Michael von der Schulenburg, the executive representative of the UN Secretary-General in Sierra Leone and head of the country's peacebuilding programme. "Peacebuilding is access to water, to education, to basic health care — access to opportunities," Mr. von der

Schulenburg explains in an interview with *Africa Renewal*.

The transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding is often difficult, notes Mr. von der Schulenburg. But it is essential to enable the UN to better align its priorities with the socio-economic and political needs of a country after war.

Mr. von der Schulenburg believes that Sierra Leone has had an exemplary peacebuilding programme since the UN operation became a wholly civilian mission. A key achievement is security. "We don't have armed groups," he says. "They are all integrated. And the combatants have not become criminals, as so often happens." The UN has also successfully implemented a community small-arms collection programme, to gather up weapons not handed in during the formal disarmament exercise. Other achievements, he adds, include a vibrant free press and the entrenchment of democracy — as demonstrated by periodic elections — as well as a growing economy.

According to a 2009 evaluation of peacebuilding projects commissioned by the Sierra Leonean government, the UN Integrated Office for Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone and the Peacebuilding Support Office in New York, many of the key goals have been met. It reports that the UN Development Programme, which managed most of the projects, achieved an 87 per cent completion rate. "Measured on the scale of budget delivery, this is clearly a remarkable performance," states the evaluation.

From electricity to courtrooms

An emergency programme to support the energy sector, for example, brought an increase in power capacity from 25 megawatts to 31 megawatts in the capital, Freetown, and from 0.5 megawatts to 5 megawatts in Bo and Kenema, two of Sierra Leone's larger cities. A project aimed at promoting youth empowerment through microcredit benefited 4,500 young women, placed 1,000 unskilled youths in training institutions and 300 others in apprenticeship programmes in official institutions.

To enhance capacity in the justice system, another project supported the training and hiring of senior barristers, legal officers, state counsels, clerks and support staff. As a result, a backlog of 700 cases was cleared within two years, and current court cases are being heard much faster.

Mr. von der Schulenburg has recommended that peacebuilding operations in Sierra Leone conclude in 2013. A decision on the end date will be taken by the Security Council. But even if the peacebuilding activities wind down, regular UN agencies will continue their support for the country's development efforts, he adds.

The general elections in 2012 will be a litmus test for Sierra Leone's nascent democracy. There are concerns that the elections could lead to violence. The 2007 parliamentary and presidential polls were generally peaceful, although there were isolated cases of violence, according to a report by European Union observers. Those observers also noted that the UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) played an important role in providing technical and logistical support.

Mr. von der Schulenburg maintains that concerns about violence and other irregularities in the next elections are justified, but manageable. He cites the success of a recent by-election in a diamond district with high unemployment.

Unemployment amidst wealth

There is a huge unemployment challenge in Sierra Leone, however. In 2010 the World Bank estimated Sierra Leone's unemployment at 80 per cent. During a visit in 2007, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also raised concerns about the country's high unemployment.

Sierra Leone's main income-generating sources are in the extractive sector — gold, diamonds, bauxite and rutile. But as a 2011 report by experts of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union pointed out, investments in Africa have been mainly in the extractive sector, which produces few jobs (see *Africa Renewal* Online*).

Mr. von der Schulenburg believes that managing the economy, especially the proceeds from the country's abundant natural resources, is Sierra Leone's greatest challenge. "Gold, iron ore, diamonds, titanium, bauxite, you name it. Now oil and gas, potentially," he notes. "So this country could become very rich suddenly. And how do you manage these?"

Preparing Sierra Leone for an economic boom will be vital for preventing future conflicts. Currently, the data on the country's untapped wealth contrasts starkly with the poor state of its social development. According to a 2011 World Bank report, life expectancy in Sierra Leone is 48 years, while the adult literacy rate is only 41 per cent. If used properly, the proceeds from Sierra Leone's natural resources can help alter such indicators.

If the Peacebuilding Commission closes shop in 2013, as Mr. von der Schulenburg anticipates, the UN can lay claim to a number of achievements: disarming ex-combatants, supporting the consolidation of democracy and promoting a growing economy. Next year, the World Bank forecasts, the economy will grow by another 8.8 per cent. With the right preparations, the anticipated economic boom may hold more lessons for countries that were once torn apart by civil strife.

*Available online: http://bit.ly/oyOngE

Global food crisis: time to break the vicious cycle

Market stall in Gabon: The global prices of staple foods have reached their highest levels ever.

Alamy / Greenshoots Communications

Delaying reforms will guarantee recurrent surges in food prices

By Masimba Tafirenyika

Once every few years or so, the world goes through a familiar ritual: various factors converge to trigger unusual increases in global food prices. In response, countries rush through emergency measures to ward off widespread shortages or worse. Prices stabilize, calm returns and the world declares yet another victory in the war against rising food prices. The crisis vanishes from the radar — until the next one.

No wonder few are surprised that for the second time in three years, another crisis is upon us. In February the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)'s food index, which tracks monthly changes in the global prices of staple foods, reached its highest level ever.

While the FAO's index was shattering records, the World Bank announced that some 44 million people in developing countries had been thrown into poverty by rising food prices since June 2010, gravely affecting the most vulnerable, who spend more than half their money on food.

A report released in May by Oxfam, a British charity, paints a gloomy picture. It predicts that food prices will more than double in the next 20 years unless the global food system is overhauled. The report, *Growing a Better Future*, forecasts price increases in the range of 120–180 per cent "as resource pressures mount and climate change takes hold."

Oxfam's predictions are in line with projections by the US-based think-tank International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), which show similar increases over the same period. José Graziano da Silva of Brazil, the newly elected FAO head, told reporters in June that "food prices would remain volatile for some time."

Africa's poor most vulnerable

Without a doubt, Africa's poor suffer the most from high food prices, as they rely on a few staple crops for survival. This year the Horn of Africa is facing its worst drought in 60 years, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Millions of people in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda will face severe food shortages. Oxfam's assessment of the sub-region is equally pessimistic, identifying it as one of the world's "food insecurity hotspots" already struggling to feed their people. According to the UN World Food Programme (WFP), millions more are threatened with starvation in eastern Mali, northern Cameroon, Chad and Niger (see *Africa Renewal* Online).

"Growing a Better Future, Oxfam International: http://bit.ly/pvDUhC

So far much has been learned about the causes of rising food prices. Yet world leaders have avoided a head-on tackle of the system's underlying weaknesses, which include low investment in agriculture, especially for smallholders; an end to huge land purchases by the rich; lack of transparency and fairness in food markets; and disputes over climate change. Each time a crisis strikes, they have instead tinkered at the edges of a broken system or employed makeshift measures.

"Unfortunately, it is a general trend in the world," complained Jacques Diouf, the outgoing FAO chief (whose term ends in December), frustrated by world leaders' failure to heed his warnings of imminent shortages during the 2008 crisis. "We react when the crisis is already here."

Deadlock in Paris

Arguably, the national interests of the major food producers have so far paralyzed efforts to reform global agricultural policies. For example, the first-ever gathering of ministers of agriculture from the Group of 20 (G20) – an informal grouping of leading economies that includes South Africa as the sole African member – failed to reach an agreement in June on policy issues.

The Paris talks deadlocked on the use of biofuels and export bans. Food experts worry that biofuel policies divert crops from food markets to the production of ethanol and biodiesel. And export bans, imposed by governments to ensure adequate stocks at home by restricting farmers from exporting food to other countries, distort global markets. The best the G20 ministers came up with was an agreement to create a global database to measure the supply, consumption and stock of rice, maize and wheat, and to exempt humanitarian purchases by the WFP from export restrictions.

This setback was the latest in a string of fruitless attempts to reshape the global food system. Before the G20 meeting Oxfam angrily noted in announcing the release of its food security study that "the failure of the [food] system flows from failures of government – failures to regulate, to correct, to protect, to resist, to invest – which mean that companies, interest groups, and elites are able to plunder resources and to redirect flows of finance, knowledge and food."

Grain silos in Malawi. If policy deadlocks among the world's major food producers do not give way to solutions, recurrent food crises are inevitable. Reuters/ Howard Burditt

Causes known

While the wrangle over how to end food crises persists, there are fewer disputes about its causes. These range from the simple to the contentious. Bad weather has reduced grain exports from Australia. Export bans by food exporters – 21 countries at the beginning of the year – continued subsidies to farmers by rich nations and market speculation have all distorted the supply and price of food on global markets. Subsidies encourage farmers to overproduce and thus depress market prices, forcing farmers in poor countries to compete with cheap food imports. Analysts also blame commodity traders for contributing to spikes in global prices through speculation.

In addition, lack of investment in agriculture and inefficient farming contribute to food shortages in Africa. About 40 per cent of Africa's farm produce is lost on the way to market, notes *The Economist*, a British weekly. In some areas, such as western Kenya and northern Ethiopia, families have less than the minimum farmland required to support a household. Lack of land titles, access to credit and property rights, especially among women, limits the amount that can be harvested from small plots, observes the magazine.

Yet rather than causing despondency, perennial food shortages have emboldened food experts and anti-poverty activists to press harder for a better system. Robert Townsend, an economist with the World Bank, argues that better seeds, more fertilizer and improved methods of cultivation increase harvests. In Benin, for example, the Bank's Global Food Crisis Response Programme has supplied fertilizer, which boosted cereal production by an additional 100,000 tonnes. Mr. Townsend also calls for more investment in research to develop improved varieties, as well as well-managed irrigation schemes to ensure reliable water supply.

A continent-wide initiative by the African Union to spend more money on agriculture is also showing encouraging results. Dozens of countries – 26 and counting – have signed agreements under a plan called the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme, run by the New

see page 33

"Sahel: surviving the lean season," *Africa Renewal Online*: http://bit.ly/qNd7qU

Microfinance: What role in Africa's development?

Time to reassess the limits and strengths of small-scale lending

By David Mehdi Hamam and Oliver Schwank

A women's cooperative in Benin produces maize flour and palm oil with the help of microcredit loans from an international charity. Redux / Jean Claude Moschetti / REA

The honeymoon with microfinance is over. Since the idea of lending or giving very small sums of money to poor people was introduced to the world by the pioneering Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, the approach has been taken up by many non-governmental organizations, donor agencies and the United Nations as an essential part of their poverty-reduction efforts. Microfinance has provided countless people with access to financial services.

But over-indebtedness of microfinance clients in Andhra Pradesh has recently led to numerous suicides and a political crisis in India's fifth-largest state. And controversy has swirled in Bangladesh around Mohamed Yunus, Nobel laureate and founder of the Grameen Bank. Together, these events have generated a backlash in public perceptions of microfinance.

Should development practitioners respond by abandoning efforts to bring financial services to the poor? Or should they seize on the heightened interest generated by the recent troubles to reassess the strengths, weaknesses and potential of microfinance? Such a reassessment may be especially pertinent in Africa, where poor people's access to formal financial institutions remains very limited.

David Mehdi Hamam is chief of the policy analysis and monitoring unit and Oliver Schwank is an associate expert at the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa

A critical innovation

Incomes in poor households are typically not only low, but also irregular. Poor people need to be able to smooth consumption flows or finance larger expenditures, but they generally lack access to banks and other formal facilities. Traditional financial institutions generally shy away from this market, either because they are unaware of it or because they deem it unprofitable.

Poor households and individuals, for their part, have difficulty proving their creditworthiness because they lack clearly defined property titles and other assets acceptable as collateral. Their only alternatives are to seek loans from informal moneylenders or to draw on savings, options that are costly and risky.

The Grameen Bank, founded by Mr. Yunus in 1976, lent small amounts of money to villagers organized in voluntary groups. The critical innovation that allowed it to overcome the

lack of collateral and grow rapidly was the "joint-liability condition." The members of such groups committed themselves to support any member struggling to repay a loan, to avoid all members losing access to future loans from the bank. The scheme built on the close social bonds within communities. It set incentives for those involved to choose new group members carefully and to monitor and support each other, relying on peer pressure to ensure timely loan repayment.

Since then Mr. Yunus's idea has spread all over the world, and has been expanded to cover a much broader range of financial services for the poor. Microfinance – rather than just microcredit – includes savings and even insurance services for poor households. By the end of 2007 more than 150 million clients worldwide had used the services of microcredit institutions. More than 100 million of them were among the poorest in their societies.

Despite microfinance's global reach, the overwhelming majority of its clients remain in Asia. In Africa the sector is growing quickly, but from a comparatively small base. At the end of 2008, microfinance institutions in sub-Saharan Africa reported reaching 16.5 million depositors and 6.5 million borrowers.

Controversy

With rapid growth comes closer scrutiny. Yet it has proven difficult to measure the actual impact of microfinance on poverty. Proponents often rely on case studies and anecdotes. This has prompted leading scholars to conclude that "strikingly, 30 years into the microfinance movement we have little solid evidence that it improves the lives of clients in measurable ways."[*]

Recent and well-publicized cases of over-indebted households and interest rates approaching those charged by loan sharks have contributed to a more critical view of microfinance – and of microcredit in particular.

There is also a more fundamental critique. Some argue that channelling scarce resources into unproductive micro-enterprises in the informal sector may actually be detrimental to sustainable development and industrialization. This is because tiny businesses contribute little to building an economy's productive capacities, or to its structural transformation.

Potential in Africa

A recent study by the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa suggests that now is a good time to reassess the role of microfinance in Africa's development.[**] Drawing from experience elsewhere, it seems clear that microfinance is not a magic bullet. On its own it cannot fundamentally transform African economies held back by many structural constraints. Yet providing a whole range of financial services to the poor – including credit for small and micro-enterprises, savings facilities, insurance, pensions, and payment and transfer facilities – is clearly desirable and can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Africa has seen an increase in such services in recent years. Microfinance institutions offer a variety of products. Where such institutions do not reach, traditional and informal providers – such as the *tontines* in Cameroon, the *susus* in Ghana and the *banquiers ambulants* in Benin – continue to serve the poor. Their informality limits their potential to expand their activities, however, and they often charge high rates.

The spread of mobile phones in particular has transformed the sector, extending it to previously unbanked areas in Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Senegal and elsewhere. Most famously, Kenya has seen the world's most rapid growth in the use of "mobile money." Launched in 2007, the service known as M-Pesa by the end of 2010 had more than 13 million customers able to use their mobile phones to make payments and transfer money. Customers can now earn moderate interest on mobile bank accounts. Farmers can insure their crops against adverse weather conditions, with payouts made directly to their mobile accounts if weather conditions indicate crop failure.

Policies and support

Still, microfinance institutions in Africa lack the capacity to match the needs of the poor. They suffer from structural weaknesses. The support services for them are of uneven quality, if they exist at all. And supervisory and coordinating bodies often have only limited resources.

African governments, in cooperation with external development partners, could therefore play a fundamental role in consolidating and sustaining the microfinance sector by providing appropriate policies and regulatory and legal frameworks. They can also protect the poor and build confidence by establishing refinancing institutions and deposit insurance schemes.

It is unreasonable to expect microfinance to fundamentally transform African economies. And it cannot replace progressive social and economic policies for structural transformation, poverty reduction and job creation. But in light of the continent's persistent poverty, it can play an essential part for the foreseeable future in providing basic financial services to the poor, and thereby help advance Africa's development goals.

[*] David Roodman and Jonathan Morduch, "The Impact of Microcredit on the Poor in Bangladesh: Revisiting the Evidence," *Centre for Global Development Working Paper, No. 174, 2009, available on the Web at:* http://www.cgdev.org/files/1422508_file_Roodman_Morduch_Bangladesh.pdf

[**] "Microfinance in Africa: Overview and Suggestions for Action by Stakeholders, *United Nations Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, New York, 2011*

Africa's least developed: lands of opportunity

Workers at a cotton mill in Mali. While aid remains important, many least developed countries also want more foreign investment. Redux / Contrasto / Riccardo Venturi

At the UN conference on LDCs, focus moves away from aid

By André-Michel Essoungou
Istanbul

Two foreign shoe sellers were once sent to Africa in search of new customers, according to an often-told tale. At the sight of locals marching barefoot, the first seller — a cautious fellow — retreated in despair, advising his company to look elsewhere. The second — a bolder character — rejoiced at what he saw as an untapped market. He ordered thousands of shoes, sold them to the locals and became a wealthy man, or so the legend goes.

There is an appealing parallel that Cheikh Sidi Diarra, the UN special adviser on Africa and high representative for least developed countries (LDCs) is willing to draw between this story and the reality of the world's 48 LDCs (33 of which are in sub-Saharan Africa): "Despite the many ills these countries endure, the world needs to start looking at them more as lands of opportunities rather than a burden," he says. Urging investors to consider nations often associated with endemic poverty, disease and instability as a potential business magnet is a bold invitation. Yet the call is in line with the general tone of an international gathering that Mr. Diarra led in May in Istanbul, Turkey.

Less 'aid talk'

Since 1981 the once-a-decade UN conference has focused on the plight of the world's most vulnerable countries (as defined by low per-capita incomes, low standards of living and high vulnerability to economic shocks). Its aim has been to mobilize international support, including by encouraging developed

countries to disburse more aid to LDCs. In the past, much time has been devoted to this issue, pitching advocates of aid against those expected to disburse it.

This time, however, talk about aid was not as central as in past meetings. That was in part a result of the budget constraints imposed on rich countries by a frustratingly slow economic recovery from the global downturn. "Donors are not in a generous mood," one diplomat revealed days before the Istanbul conference. Also, a growing realization that aid alone cannot solve the fundamental problems LDCs face added to what some see as a welcome shift away from the usual debates. Businesspeople and civil society representatives were in fact among the most noticeable and active of the 9,000 participants at the five-day Istanbul meeting.

Ultimately, the Programme of Action agreed upon in Turkey renewed aid commitments made at the previous conference in Brussels, Belgium, 10 years ago. Once again donors pledged to devote between 0.15 and 0.2 per cent of their gross national incomes (GNIs) to aid the LDCs.

Civil society groups in Istanbul criticized that as too little. "Having caused massive costs in the LDCs through financial and food speculation, unjust trade rules, illegitimate loans with onerous conditionality and ecological damage, including climate change, the developed countries have not even committed to provide more aid to LDCs," they said in a declaration. It is a charge that Mr. Diarra disputed. Although not new, this promise of aid remains an important one, he argued, adding that if fulfilled, it would likely raise the amount of aid actually going to LDCs from its current annual level of $38 billion.

More trade, investment

Despite the talk of aid, the emphasis in Istanbul was on trade, investment and productive capacities. Months

Sorting Kenyan coffee beans for export. Trade issues were hotly debated at the Istanbul conference on LDCs.

Redux / eyevine / Kate Holt

before the meeting, trade issues were at the centre of some of the most heated debates among negotiators during the lengthy preparatory talks. Along with other partners, African LDCs called for the adoption of a long-debated scheme that would allow all their exports to enter developed-country markets without any duties or quotas. Such preferential treatment was considered a step too far by most developed countries, however, even though LDCs' share of world trade currently stands at only 1 per cent.

The charms of the crossroads city of Istanbul did not change any minds. Instead, there was renewal of yet another decade-old commitment: tariff-free access to developed nations' markets for 97 per cent of LDCs' exports (see *Africa Renewal*, June 2001).

Unfortunately for African LDCs, this arrangement provides little benefit, according to a report by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), a US-based think tank. The 3 per cent of exports excluded from tariff-free treatment covers some of the countries' most important export products, including agricultural commodities such as sugar, rice, meat and dairy products. Africa will benefit only if all its exports are given full access to developed countries' markets, the report notes. There is hope that a better deal could be reached at the seemingly never-ending Doha trade talks at the World Trade Organization.

African LDCs' quest for more foreign investment arguably received a stronger boost at the meeting. A set of measures designed to encourage developed countries' corporations to invest in LDCs was adopted, with governments expected to encourage their companies to invest in LDCs by providing favourable fiscal incentives and special lines of credit.

Although the continent is fast becoming an attractive destination for foreign investors (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2011), such incentives are much needed. "Our minds now are on how to get private investment coming from outside.... We think that has the foundation to help us move on the economic front," affirmed Dede Ahoefa Ekoue, Togo's minister for planning and development, in an interview with *The Guardian*, a British newspaper.

In recent years the 33 LDCs from Africa have benefited most from the growth in foreign direct investment (FDI) to LDCs, which rose from $4.1 billion to

"The Costs and Benefits of Duty-Free, Quota-Free Market Access for Poor Countries, *International Food Policy Research Institute*, June 2010 (available on the Web at http://bit.ly/ifpri-tariff).

$32.4 billion between 2001 and 2008. African LDCs accounted for almost half of that total. Yet not only did FDI's eight-year growth come to a brief halt following the global recession, it also appears that FDI is mostly oriented toward just a few sectors, such as oil and minerals. As a result, few jobs have been created and strong growth in oil-rich countries such as Angola and Equatorial Guinea has yet to translate into meaningful change in people's lives.

Such trends must change if foreign investment is to help reduce poverty, which affects over half the population in the continent's LDCs. In order for it to do so, the Istanbul Programme of Action calls for economic diversification to reduce African LDCs' dependence on the extractive sector.

One major point of agreement among delegates in Istanbul was the need to invest in productive sectors, including agriculture, industry and infrastructure. The Programme of Action refers to these as "development multipliers," as improvement in each area will benefit others. In an era of rising food prices, the call for further investment in agriculture is of particular interest to Africa, as the continent spends around $33 billion every year on food imports.

Business deals

Aside from policy-makers' agreements and disputes, the LDC conference was an opportunity for hundreds of African businesspeople to conclude deals with their foreign counterparts. A trade fair designed by its organizers as a "matchmaking event" was considered the "most important aspect of the conference" by Abdullah Gül, the president of Turkey.

Although it is too early to assess the deals African entrepreneurs sealed in Istanbul, their mere presence and the interest expressed in some of their ventures confirmed the rapidly evolving perception of the continent, at least in business circles, as an emerging market with great potential.

As the rest of the world hears calls to look at the continent in a more positive way, are the continent's LDCs ready to seize the opportunity? "There is no doubt many African LDCs are performing better. Sound economic policies are leading to strong improvements in various areas," asserted Mr. Diarra. In Rwanda for example, the adoption of an ambitious information and communications technology plan is transforming the country into a regional hub. Malawi and Sierra Leone managed to boost productivity in agriculture in a matter of just a few years (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2011).

Based on their strengths and needs, more African LDCs should follow suit, Mr. Diarra urges. If they do, the legendary foreign shoe sellers arriving in Africa may be left only with the impression that they came in far too late.

Africa's 'group of 33'

Since 1971 when the least developed countries (LDCs) category was created by the UN, sub-Saharan African countries have dominated the list. Four decades later, with 33 members (only 14 of the region's 47 countries are not LDCs), sub-Saharan Africa still maintains the biggest regional presence in the group. All parts of the sub-continent are represented. In recent years, two countries from the continent, Botswana and Cape Verde, have graduated out of the category. Analysts say others (including Angola and Equatorial Guinea) have the potential to join them. However, the newly created state of South Sudan is widely expected to join the LDCs group.

Africa's LDCs are highly diverse, but most have in common an average growth of around 5 per cent in recent years. Of these countries, oil exporters (Angola, Chad, Equatorial Guinea and Sudan) and mineral producers (the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique and Zambia) benefited most from the surge in demand for commodities, mainly from the emerging economies of China, India and Brazil. Such a trend has led to an increased dependence of their economies on primary commodities, according to the latest *Least Developed Countries Report*" of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

One feature of African LDCs is their high rates of return on foreign direct investments, at around 13 per cent. UNCTAD says that investing in LDCs is a smart move. "Rates of return on foreign direct investment ... are much higher than on investment in developed, or even other developing, countries."

- Angola
- Benin
- Burkina Faso
- Burundi
- Central African Republic
- Chad
- Comoros
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Djibouti
- Equatorial Guinea
- Eritrea
- Ethiopia
- Gambia
- Guinea
- Guinea-Bissau
- Lesotho
- Liberia
- Madagascar
- Malawi
- Mali
- Mauritania
- Mozambique
- Niger
- Rwanda
- São Tomé and Príncipe
- Senegal
- Sierra Leone
- Somalia
- Sudan
- Tanzania
- Togo
- Uganda
- Zambia

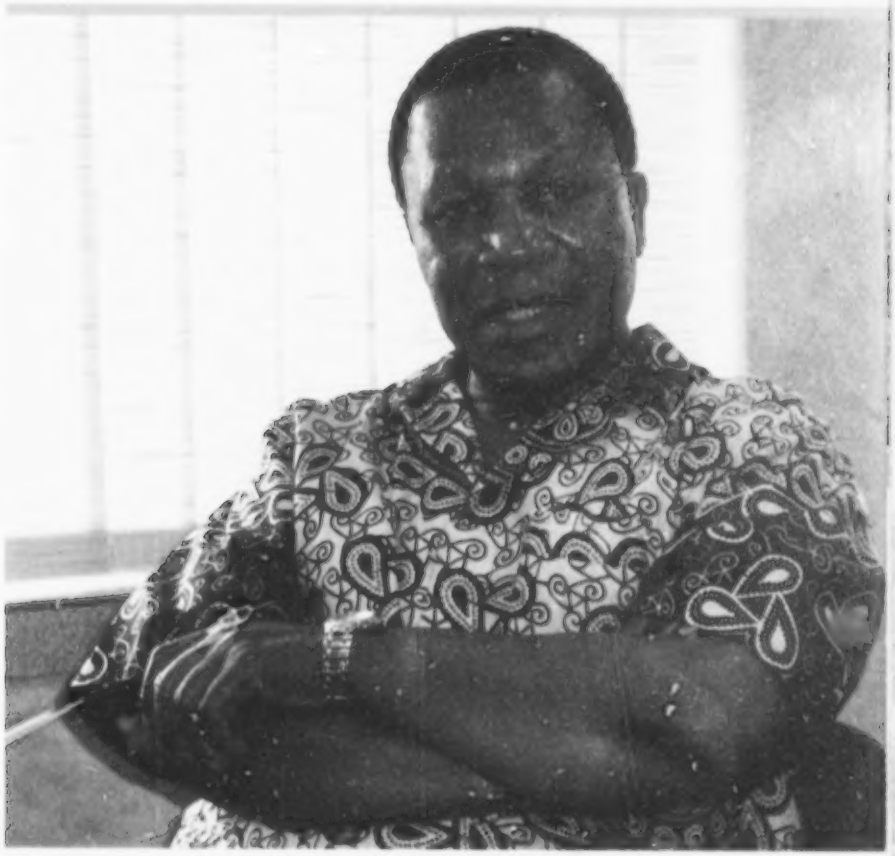
LDC Report online:

INTERVIEW

'NEPAD is an African spirit for renewal'

Ten years old, the plan scores some gains, faces key tests

In 2001, African leaders officially adopted the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) as the continent's premier framework for economic, social and political advancement. With the plan's 10th anniversary approaching, *Africa Renewal*'s managing editor, Ernest Harsch, visited the offices of the NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency in Midrand, South Africa, and spoke with Richard Mkandawire, its director of partnerships, resource mobilization and communications.



Although NEPAD began as a vision of African leaders, more voices are now coming from civil society groups as well, says NEPAD's Richard Mkandawire.

Africa Renewal / Ernest Harsch

Africa Renewal **Ten years after the New Partnership for Africa's Development was launched, how do you see its first decade?**

Richard Mkandawire NEPAD was a remarkable vision by African leaders. The past 10 years have provided increased confidence and hope about what is actually achievable in Africa. There has been a demonstration of resilience, with Africa leapfrogging onto a viable development path, alongside China — the so-called dragon economy — India and others. One senses a momentum that has been re-energized by NEPAD.

There have not been too many development frameworks that have lived as long as NEPAD — 10 years is quite remarkable. NEPAD is an African spirit for renewal, which will genuinely transform African economies. On the security front, we have never seen such a momentum [towards peace]. There is an increased commitment by African leaders to direct resources to their private sectors.

Our leaders' engagements with the Group of Eight and other global leaders have clearly shown that the international community is beginning to listen and respond to African-driven development priorities. Of course, the international community could have done better in terms of commitment and financing, but there is a response emerging.

AR **African civil society groups and the media often ask: Where are the tangible results?**

RM Agreed. A lot of people would like to see the impact on the ground. But let's not forget that planning is as important as impact. Look at China. It took decades to plan and the results are coming only now. Planning is critical. And if you look at the qualitative aspects of the planning process in

Africa, there is increased sensitivity to the NEPAD vision of good governance, transparency and accountability. We have come a long way from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, when civil society organizations had no say in the management of the affairs of the state.

We now see critical voices coming from civil society organizations. Things are much more open. There are literally thousands of civil society organizations on the ground, making major contributions towards the national debates on development, on democracy, on good governance.

AR You mention civil society engagement nationally. What about avenues for civil society input into NEPAD priorities at the continental level?

RM We are working on structures focused on civil society organizations, to see how best to begin to engage them on a continental level. A very good example is our facilitation work with the African Union Commission on a continental programme of farmers' organizations. This enables farmers' organizations to begin to share their experiences. It serves as a platform for mutual learning and peer reviewing. They engage their own constituencies, and we are hoping that this continental platform can also be a conduit for channelling ideas to African leaders, for example on facilitating regional markets. But obviously we need to do more, by looking at other civil society organizations than just in agriculture.

We hope we can play a key role in modernizing civil society. The future drivers of reforms in Africa will be civil society organizations. They have the capacity to engage governments, to ensure that governments become accountable to their citizens around a whole range of issues. Providing them with additional capacities will be an important priority.

AR Last year NEPAD held a transport and infrastructure summit, and at the UN General Assembly's review of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) we often heard African leaders emphasize the importance of infrastructure. How important is infrastructure in NEPAD's agenda?

RM African leaders are absolutely clear that infrastructure development is a priority, alongside agriculture, education, health and so forth, indeed, alongside all the MDGs. Infrastructure is an area that will fast-track regional integration, connecting people across borders. But it will also connect rural communities with urban areas and ensure that food flows from remote corners of a countryside into urban areas. It will ensure that local communities have access to health services, so that people are able to go to hospitals

What is NEPAD?

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was officially adopted at a July 2001 summit meeting of African heads of state. The regional plan expressed the determination of Africa's people "to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world." It called for a new relationship between Africa and the international community in which the non-African partners would seek to complement the region's own efforts. The United Nations, the major industrialized nations and various donor agencies pledged to extend their support.

While much time was initially spent in setting up ad hoc institutional arrangements for NEPAD and explaining its goals and principles to both African and international audiences, the plan also registered a number of accomplishments during its first decade. These have included:

- The establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), by which African governments voluntarily agree to allow their political, human rights and economic policy performance to be scrutinized by panels of prominent Africans. Thirty African countries had joined the APRM as of January 2011, with 14 of them having completed a full peer review.
- The elaboration of the Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP), designed to help African governments, farmers and businesspeople better plan and coordinate efforts to promote agricultural productivity and food security in an environmentally sustainable way. By May 2011, 26 African governments had signed CAADP "compacts" committing them to increase agricultural investments (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2011).
- The start of construction of an underwater fibre-optic cable (Ubuntunet) off Africa's coasts to better connect its information and communications lines to the rest of the world, as well as a cross-border land network (Umojanet) to improve connectivity among African countries.
- A variety of projects to strengthen road networks and electricity grids among African countries, to help improve regional trade and cooperation.

During 2010, NEPAD's structures became more fully integrated into the institutions of the African Union. That year, the former NEPAD Secretariat was replaced by the new NEPAD Planning and Coordinating Agency, headquartered in South Africa. Its chief executive is Ibrahim Assane Mayaki, of Niger.

within a short space of time. African leaders have agreed that they will champion increased financing of infrastructure initiatives, including for energy, which is in such short supply in Africa, despite huge available natural resources and huge hydroelectric potential.

AR And the financing cannot just be from public sources, but must also come from the private sector?

RM The future growth of national African economies will be driven by the increased participation of the private sector. Equally important will be strengthening public-private partnerships, not just with the African private sector but also with the international private sector. Increasingly we are seeing that Africa is emerging as a destination for future investments by the international community. In the area of agriculture, Africa is one place which has a surplus of productive land. We are seeing interest in natural resources, whether it's oil or gas or other mineral products. The return on investments is much higher in Africa than anywhere else in the world. The challenge is ensuring that our national governments create a conducive environment for the private sector to thrive.

AR If we look at foreign investment flows to Africa, there's a clear preference for mining and oil, rather than agriculture and other sectors that may create more jobs. What can African governments do to attract more investments to non-mineral sectors?

RM National governments in Africa will need to provide incentives to investors so that they can create more job opportunities and their investments will spill over to the wider society. Africa has missed out by allowing the development of the extractive industries at the expense of industries that generate employment, whether agriculture or manufacturing or other industries. Africa must expand its industrial base by ensuring that investors move into value addition to create more jobs, to generate growth and to develop new sets of skills for Africans.

African countries must more actively direct foreign investments into agriculture and other sectors that can create more jobs

Age Fotostock / Jacob Halaska

AR Initially it often seemed that NEPAD was pitched to the Group of Eight and other donors, with expectations of higher aid flows. And although several G8 summits did pledge to increase aid, the global economic crash of 2008 further hampered that effort. Was that a wake-up call for Africa?

RM Within Africa there is recognition that development will not occur simply by relying on external donor support. Africa will need to mobilize its own domestic resources to develop itself. Africa has demonstrated that it has the capacity to generate its own resources. It will need to tend to issues of efficiency and effectiveness, to how the available resources within Africa are utilized. That may mean increasing capacity in the financial sector, improving fiscal policies and a whole range of other steps. Yes, global support is important, but so is what Africa can generate from within.

AR When NEPAD was launched, the main global forum on economic issues was the G8. Now there is the Group of 20, with China, India, Brazil, South Africa and others from the South participating. Is this shift giving Africa a stronger voice?

RM The global architecture on development is changing, and the G20 exemplifies the very fast change, with new players coming in to assert themselves more forcefully on global issues. Africa needs to find increased space within this new architecture, especially the G20, to ensure that its voice is properly represented and that the diversities of the African continent are taken into account. This is part of the debate which the African Union will need to advance.

AIDS breakthrough threatened by budget woes

A patient having her blood tested in Johannesburg, South Africa. Researchers find that treatment makes people living with HIV far less infectious.

Associated Press / Denis Farrell

New discovery brings hope, but will the funds be there?

By Michael Fleshman

After 30 years and over 20 million deaths in Africa alone, US researchers now report that early treatment of people infected with the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) that leads to AIDS cuts transmission of the disease by over 96 per cent. The news has sent shock waves through the medical and scientific world. Unexpectedly announced by the US National Institutes of Health on 12 May after a six-year clinical trial, the discovery that anti-retroviral drugs (ARVs) can make people living with HIV far less infectious means that humanity finally has the tools to reverse the global epidemic.

The announcement has been welcomed as a "game changer" by Michel Sidibé, the head of UNAIDS, the UN's anti-AIDS agency. The high rate of new infections – almost 2 million in Africa alone in 2009 – he told *Africa Renewal*, made it impossible for treatment programmes to keep pace. But the recent discovery now gives the continent the potential to make dramatic cuts in new infections and get ahead of the treatment curve.

The $73 million, nine-country study found that beginning ARV treatment shortly after diagnosis reduces the amount of HIV in the body to almost nothing, making it much less likely that people with HIV will infect others. Previously, patients began ARV treatment only in later stages of the disease, which damages the body's natural defences against illness. Although there is no cure for HIV, a combination or "cocktail" of different ARV drugs

suppresses the virus and allows the body to recover. The patient must take the drugs for life.

Treatment as prevention

"This finally settles the debate over whether to invest in prevention or treatment," says Mr. Sidibé. "Now we know that treatment *is* prevention." The study prompted UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to open a three-day conference on AIDS at UN headquarters in early June with the declaration that "today we are gathered to end AIDS."

Nor was it the only good news for Africa, the region hit hardest by the disease. UNAIDS reported at the 8-10 June meeting that AIDS-related deaths, overall infection rates and new infections have dropped in recent years, while access to ARVs has skyrocketed, although it remains well short of the need (see table, page 32).

High hopes hit tight budgets

Having the technology to curb AIDS, however, is not the same as having the political will to do so. Sceptical observers note that total spending on HIV and AIDS programmes is already about $8 billion short of needs and that past pledges to increase spending on anti-AIDS services are unmet. Where the money will come from to put many millions of new patients on treatment, as the study urges, is anybody's guess.

Instead, the breakthrough on treatment comes amidst signs of donor fatigue. After a nearly 10-fold increase in resources for HIV treatment and prevention programmes in African and other developing countries over the past decade — money that has saved the lives of millions — UNAIDS and the US-based Kaiser Family Foundation report that international AIDS funding was essentially static in 2009, at $7.6 billion, the first year ever without an increase. The numbers for 2010 are even worse, showing an actual drop from 2009 levels, the first significant decline in AIDS donor funding since the epidemic began.

"I think the era when we could rely on increased funding for AIDS programmes in developing countries is probably over for good," Kaiser Family Foundation Vice-President and Global Health and HIV Policy Director Jennifer Kates told *Africa Renewal*. "The only real question is whether funding will hover around current levels or whether last year's drop is the beginning of a long-term decline" — a situation that would make it difficult for people in developing countries to take advantage of the breakthrough.

'Disowned and abandoned'

The tighter budgets are already beginning to bite. In testimony before the US Congress last year, Dr. Peter Mugyenyi, director of the pioneering Joint Clinical Research Centre in Kampala, the first and largest ARV treatment facility in Uganda, praised Washington's multi-billion-dollar AIDS treatment programme, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), for saving countless African lives. Because of funding from PEPFAR, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, national health budgets and other donors, the number of Africans on ARVs has risen from fewer than 50,000 in 2002 (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2005) to about 4.5 million in less than a decade. "The carnage that I and my fellow health care providers used to witness on a daily basis faded as the situation changed from despair and misery to hope."

But he also told the lawmakers that "the twin realities of the [2008] economic crisis and flat-lining of funds for PEPFAR threaten to reverse these highly positive changes and miss opportunities to defeat the epidemic." ARV treatment must continue uninterrupted for life, Dr. Mugyenyi noted, and funding needs to increase as newly infected patients join those already in therapy. Already, he continued, "my institution ... is not taking on any new patients. We are forced to turn away desperate patients daily.... Nowadays when new ones reach a stage when they require therapy ... they are disowned and abandoned to their fate."

Dr. Mugyenyi agreed with public health experts who argue for increased funding for other deadly diseases in Africa — but not by taking money away from AIDS as some in the West have suggested. He reminded the US legislators that, despite the huge improvement in access to treatment over the past decade, fewer than half of those Africans who need the drugs currently receive them. Other urgent health needs, he said, should

AIDS activists demonstrating outside the European Union office in Nairobi, Kenya, to protest a trade agreement that could jeopardize imports of cheap generic medicines from India.

Associated Press / Khalil Senosi

be met, "but not at the expense of HIV/AIDS, which needs increased support." He quoted Ugandan Health Minister Jim K. Muhwezi in noting that "concern is growing across the African continent" about the slowdown of international assistance for anti-AIDS programmes, a concern that surfaced before the current cuts.

Doing more with less

But with the means to roll back HIV now within reach, many doctors and researchers have called for radical changes in the global campaign against AIDS in order to do more with less. That would include redefining ARV treatment as a prevention tool and expanding testing to identify people with HIV before they infect others.

An article in the 11 June 2011 issue of the influential medical journal *The Lancet* called for moving money out of poorly targeted and often-ineffective prevention programmes aimed at changing individual behaviour into ARV-based treatment-as-prevention efforts. The authors argued that greatly expanded treatment programmes would save money over the long term by preventing millions of new infections and deaths.

The Lancet editorialized that paying for such a large increase in drug access, and administering the powerful drugs to tens of millions of additional patients through today's overstretched public health systems, is "a huge challenge." But the discovery that treatment is the most effective prevention, it concluded, presents the world with an unprecedented opportunity to "make a big difference" in the 30-year war against AIDS.

Treatment versus trade rules

Advocacy groups, including the South African Treatment Action Campaign and Doctors Without Borders, point to other factors jeopardizing treatment access. Chief among them are restrictions on the export of cheaper generic copies of patented ARV medicines to African and other poor developing countries.

Generics have been at the heart of the African treatment revolution over the last decade, driving costs down from as much as $15,000 per year in 2000 to as little as $200 per year currently, making it possible to treat millions of low-income people. The innovative combination of up to three of the most effective ARV drugs into a single tablet by Indian generics manufacturers also cut costs and made staying on treatment much easier for patients.

Because India, Thailand and some other countries were not yet signatories to the new, more restrictive intellectual property rules adopted by the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995, they were free to manufacture and market generic ARVs in African and other poor countries. In recent years, however, the main exporters of generics have adopted WTO controls, jeopardizing future supplies of the low-cost anti-AIDS drugs on which treatment-as-prevention programmes will rely.

Africa led a successful fight at the WTO for an exemption for the export of generic drugs in 2003. But since then just one shipment of drugs has been made under its complicated procedures, a track record that has all but dashed hopes that the exemption would serve as a pharmaceutical lifeline to African and other poor countries (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2010). Michelle Childs, policy director for Doctors Without Borders' drug access programme, also accused the US and the European Union of seeking tougher patent protections than required by the WTO in bilateral trade negotiations with developing countries. Such actions, she told *Africa Renewal*, further undermine access to medicines by the global poor.

Despite the remaining obstacles, UNAIDS head Sidibé is optimistic that Africa is turning the corner on HIV/AIDS and that resources for the continent's other urgent health needs will be found. "You cannot deal with maternal health and child health and maternal mortality in Africa and not deal with HIV," he told *Africa Renewal*. "You cannot deal with tuberculosis if you cannot deal with HIV and vice versa. So this means that AIDS can be used to leverage progress in other areas. It is time to take AIDS out of this mode of crisis management and look at it as a long-term response."

Sub-Saharan Africa's progress against AIDS

	2001	2009
People living with HIV	20.3 mn	22.5 mn*
New infections	2.2 mn	1.8 mn
New infections among children	0.19 mn	0.13 mn
AIDS-related deaths	1.4 mn	1.3 mn
% of population with HIV	5.9 %	5 %
Number of countries with 25% or greater decline in infections since 2001	n.a.	22
% of those needing treatment receiving ARVs**	2 %	37 %

*Highest confirmed figure; the decline in deaths due to ARV treatment. **2008 figure.

Source: Africa Renewal from UNAIDS data

'Arab Spring'

from page 14

'An urgent reminder'

Whatever the conditions in particular African countries, the underlying problems are not that different from those that contributed to the revolutions in the north, observers point out. People throughout Africa have similar grievances and aspirations.

The time for the continent's rulers to adapt is now, African Development Bank President Donald Kaberuka told ministers of finance assembled in Addis Ababa in March. "Events in North Africa," he said, "are indeed an urgent reminder of the challenges of inclusive growth, of job creation, of opportunities for the young, of leaving no one behind." Despite the numerous advances of North African economies, he observed, recent growth did not create enough jobs, while "the predatory, dynastic nature of the state" hindered reform, led large sectors of the population to feel disenfranchised and ultimately sparked revolution.

Echoing that point two months later, the discussions at the AU summit in Malabo were organized around the theme of "accelerating youth empowerment for sustainable development." Noting that youth unemployment and feelings of marginalization contributed to the popular uprisings in North Africa, Mr. Ping, the AU Commission chair, urged governments to go beyond talk to enact "concrete measures" to meet the needs of African youth.

From the activist side, Ms. Maathai also advises the continent's leaders not to be slow in recognizing "the inevitability of change." Africans would much prefer to "have revolutions brought about by the ballot box in free and fair elections." But if that option does not become more widespread, "slowly but surely, even Africans south of the Sahara will shed their fear and confront their dictatorial leaders."

African elections

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election consultant and former director of IFES's Africa programme. "Right now, there is little African countries need to learn about the technical issues surrounding elections."

Elections observation, often focused on voting day, is gradually taking a wider perspective. Beyond recording irregularities at polling stations, a growing number of observers are paying attention to other elements, including the media coverage of the campaigns and the voter registration process. The aim is to ensure equal access to public and private media for opposition candidates and incumbents, as well as to increase the credibility of the voters list. "This shift is important," Mr. Hennemeyer told *Africa Renewal*. "An election is not an event, but a process. There is a need to monitor what happens months if not years before."

And despite the central importance of elections in building and solidifying democratic societies, analysts point out, their quality depends on progress in other areas as well. Good elections are directly linked to the independence of the judicial system, a competitive media environment, the ability of civil society to be involved in public life and a political landscape that allows free expression of diverging views.

Beyond such issues, Mr. Mbembe advocates a wider use of proportional representation in African elections. Such an arrangement, he argues, can bring more peaceful transitions by lowering incentives for protest and violence from those most afraid to lose. In such arrangements, unlike in football games, victory will cease to mean that the winner takes all.

Global food crisis

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Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the AU development agency. Signatories are required to increase spending on agriculture to at least 10 per cent of their budgets (see *Africa Renewal*, April 2011).

Higher yields

The results in some countries have been remarkable. Rwanda, which in 2007 became the first to adopt the programme, increased land allocations to maize almost fivefold in three years. As a result, maize yields rose by more than 212 per cent over the same period — from less than 0.8 tonnes per hectare to 2.5 tonnes. Malawi has also seen comparable successes, along with Sierra Leone and Tanzania, among others.

Equally important is the need to end the gender imbalance. Giving rural women the same access as men to land, technology, financial services, education and markets, argues FAO in its *State of Food and Agriculture 2010–11* report, will increase agricultural production and reduce the number of hungry people by up to 150 million worldwide.

There is no doubt that the pace of overhauling the global food system will be painfully slow, with modest progress at best. This will guarantee repeated food crises. Responding to the failure by the G20 to reach an agreement on agricultural policies, Oxfam noted that the group's "sticking plaster approach falls well short of the major surgery" needed to tackle the global food system's maladies. As with a festering wound left untreated, failure to act now will only hasten the inevitable — a visit to the surgery room.

"The State of Food and Agriculture 2010-11, FAO.

Social media boosts Nigeria's polls

Elections redefined, as candidates and voters go online

BY ANDRÉ-MICHEL ESSOUNGOU

In 2008, Nigeria's presidential candidate Barack Obama showed the world that by using social media ways never seen before, with web2.0 tools and platforms, one can literally elected president of Nigeria. And took the extraordinary step of announcing his bid for the Nigerian presidency on Facebook. On Wednesday, 15 September 2010, he informed his 217,000 plus fans on the world's most popular social networking platform of his intent. Twenty four hours later 4,000 more fans joined the page. By the day of the election, on 16 April 2011, he had over half a million followers.

Mr Jonathan's online campaign was only one illustration of the social media fever that gripped Africa's most populous country (with around 150 million people) during its most recent presidential, parliamentary and local elections. A report by two researchers who helped track online traffic during the month-long polls argues that the country's use of social media reached unprecedented levels. "Nigeria set a new record for recent African elections in the number of reports tracked using social media," it says. In addition to the approximately 3 million registered Nigerians on Facebook, and 360,000 on Twitter, almost every institution involved in Nigeria's elections conducted an aggressive social networking outreach, including the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC), political parties, candidates, media houses, civil society groups and even the police.

The report notes that between 10 March and 16 April 2011, the electoral commission posted almost 4,000 tweets, many in response to voter queries. Using Twitter, commission officials at polling stations around the country also were able to communicate among themselves, and even confirmed the death of one of their members who had been attacked. "Twitter ultimately proved to be the most efficient way to interact with INEC," the document authors report. The commission's use of social media led to its website receiving a record 25 million hits in three days during the presidential election. "By using social media to inspire voters, the electoral commission has redefined elections in Nigeria," analyzed *Punch*, the country's most circulated newspaper.

The boom in use of social media during elections also helped the media expand their readerships. Shortly before the polls, the *Daily Trust* newspaper had 32,000 fans on Facebook. A few weeks later, the number had more than doubled to 65,000, placing its online reach beyond its print distribution of 50,000. To build up its fan base, the newspaper also used social media in its reporting. Journalists solicited and used questions from Facebook fans for interviews with the chairman of INEC. Since the elections, the *Daily Trust* has further increased its Facebook presence, with 95,000 fans by July 2011.

The online networking platforms reflected popular interest. Unsurprisingly, social media use reached its peak during the presidential election on 16 April. On that day, a total of 33,460 text messages and 130,426 posts on Twitter and Facebook were sent by some 65,000 voters.

The content was mixed, the authors point out. "Social media, especially Twitter, was used to report occurrences [of fraud] — truthful as well as fabricated." Yet, they add, it played a mostly constructive role during the post-election violence by exposing unfounded rumours.

"Social media tools," the report concludes, "revolutionized ⇒

Reuters / Akintunde Akinleye

Ghana's cocoa farmers get advice via mobile phones

Africa's mobile advertising up

the efficiency of election observing by increasing coverage and reporting, while minimizing costs. ... They changed how information was disseminated in Nigeria. Citizens accessed information directly and more accurately, resulting in unsurpassed participation in politics during the 2011 elections."

That upbeat assessment, however, needs to be put in context: An estimated 65,000 people posted contents online during Nigeria's polls, but they were just a tiny fraction of the registered 73 million voters. Still, a new trend appears to have begun. ●

Kenya government launches 'open data' website

Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki inaugurated his government's "open data" website in Nairobi on 8 July. The site, which offers citizens access to a wide variety of official statistics on health, education, public spending and other development and policy priorities, is said to be the first of its kind in Africa.

The site, [illegible], is intended to make government more efficient and transparent, officials told reporters, and support Kenya's emergence as a leader in the booming African information technology industry. In addition to user-friendly maps, graphs and charts of commonly sought information, the site also provides raw data for programmers and analysts, who are invited to design their own software applications for the material.

Kenyan software engineers and entrepreneurs were quick to realize the potential of Africa's enthusiastic embrace of mobile telephones. Kenyan designers have won high praise for such products as the popular M-Pesa cell phone banking service and the Ushahidi citizen reporting system that has been used to monitor elections, document political violence and locate earthquake survivors in Haiti.

Mobile telephone subscriptions in Africa have nearly quadrupled since 2005 to over 360 million, and African software engineers are competing to develop phone-based access to health, education, farming and government services. Industry analysts expect strong growth in the African mobile market to continue. ●

Africa Watch

Ghana's economy moves up another notch

Buoyed by oil revenue, stronger fiscal discipline and a decade of sustained growth, Ghana officially entered the ranks of middle-income countries on 1 July. According to the World Bank's country classifications, Ghana's 2010 per capita gross national income of $1,190 shifted it from the low-income to the lower-middle-income category. It was among four African countries to move up the ratings ladder, joining Zambia and Mauritania, which also climbed from low- to lower-middle-income status, and Tunisia, which moved from the lower-middle to the upper-middle-income category.

World Bank analysts predict that Ghana's economy will grow at a blistering 13.4 per cent in 2011 — the highest in sub-Saharan Africa and among the fastest in the world. Oil will account for only about 2.5 per cent of Ghana's gross domestic product (GDP) this year, with much of the growth coming from farming and services, which accounted for over 80 per cent of GDP last year.

As a result of that broad-based growth, says the Bank, Ghana is one of only a handful of African countries on track to reach the key Millennium Development Goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015. The West African country has also made impressive strides towards other MDG targets: reducing the child mortality rate from 106 per thousand in 2000 to 69 last year and increasing the combined graduation rate for primary and secondary schooling from 70 per cent to 83 per cent over the past decade.

Tema oil refinery in Ghana. As oil production rises, Ghana will need to carefully manage the revenue while also avoiding over-dependence on the sector.

Reuters / Yaw Bibini

More should be done to distribute the benefits of growth evenly, the Bank cautions, noting that poverty has actually increased in the northern part of the country in recent years. And, with oil revenues set to rise in the coming years, the Bank is urging the government to put in place stronger regulatory and policy safeguards so that Ghana can manage that income well and also not become excessively reliant on oil at the expense of other economic sectors. But with inflation down, foreign direct investment flooding in and a debt-to-income ratio of less than 3 per cent, Ghana seems likely to stay in the ranks of the world's leading economic performers.

In East and West, funding to boost African regional integration

On 14 July the African Development Bank (ADB) announced that it would provide $40 million to upgrade the Rift Valley Railway, an important East African rail corridor that connects the port city of Mombasa, Kenya, with Uganda's capital, Kampala. The railway loan is part of a five-year $246 million upgrade to the line, which will receive new locomotives and freight cars, signalling equipment and track work along the 100-year-old line. Currently, railways move just 8 per cent of the region's freight, while 92 per cent travels by road. The resulting inefficiencies and delays have imposed heavy transport costs on shippers, raised prices for consumers and damaged the competitive position of East African exporters. The overhaul is expected to more than double the railroad's carrying capacity to 3.3 million tonnes per year by 2015 and cut shipping costs by 30 per cent.

The following day the ADB announced that it will provide €60 million to expand a shipping container terminal in Lomé, Togo. The goal is to increase Lomé's container capacity by more than sixfold, from 221,000 containers per year to 1.5 million. The port boasts one of the few deep-water harbours in the region. In addition to Togolese freight, it handles cargo for Togo's landlocked neighbours, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso, as well as northern Nigeria.

Port authorities have reached agreement with the Mediterranean Shipping Company, the world's second largest shipping firm, to channel most of its West and Central African shipments through the expanded Lomé facility. The expansion is also expected to promote greater regional economic integration, create jobs and reduce shipping costs and delays.

Nigeria primed for prosperity

With one of the faster growing economies in the world today, Nigeria is projected to overtake South Africa as Africa's largest economy by 2025, according to a report by a US bank, Morgan Stanley. That prediction is also in line with the World Bank's assessment, which recently noted that the country is ready to "build a prosperous economy ... and reduce poverty." Last year the West African giant's economy grew by a very robust 8.4 per cent.

Vibrant retail trade, increasing oil production and a current account surplus are key factors driving the Nigerian economy forward, emphasizes Morgan Stanley. Although oil and gas exports account for 90 per cent of Nigeria's exports, the World Bank notes that the country is expanding its revenue from other sectors as well. Between 2003 and 2009 the non-oil economy grew by an average of 9 per cent per year. "Growth continued to be broad-based ... driven by strong performance of the agricultural, trade, telecommunications and manufacturing sectors."

The newly appointed finance minister, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, is however alarmed at recurrent expenditure, which is almost 74 per cent of the budget, leaving little for capital. Ms. Okonjo-Iweala, who was a World Bank managing director until her ministerial appointment in July, wants more investments in employment-generating sectors. It is estimated that some 50 million youths are unemployed in Nigeria.

Insufficient power supply is another major concern. Nigeria currently generates 3,500 megawatts of electricity at best, although it needs 104,000 megawatts, according to former presidential spokesman Olusegun Adeniyi.

Morgan Stanley acknowledges that Nigerian institutions "do not have a good track record." The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, an anti-corruption agency, recovered $9 billion from corrupt public officials between 2005 and 2010, reports *Vanguard*, a Nigerian newspaper. President Goodluck Jonathan has promised to fight corruption more energetically, as a key element of building a more prosperous economy.

Nigeria Stock Exchange in Lagos.

Flickr / S. Remeika

Africa needs more manufacturing, argues the UN

The average growth of African economies has been up in recent years and investor interest is booming. Yet the continent's manufacturing sector continues to lag, according to the UN Industrial Development Organization and the UN Conference on Trade and Development. "The share of African manufacturing in gross domestic product (GDP) rose from a low of 6.3 per cent in 1970 to a peak of 15.3 per cent in 1990," notes their *Economic Development in Africa Report 2011*. "Since then, there has been a significant decline in the contribution of manufacturing to GDP."

The continent now accounts for only about 1 per cent of global manufacturing. Most of Africa's manufacturing firms are small or micro-enterprises. Although bigger firms are present, mostly in the raw material and extractive sectors, they offer only limited job opportunities. So far, says the report, "The labour-intensive manufacturing sectors (e.g. textiles, apparel and leather products) play a rather limited role in African manufacturing today, both in terms of domestic manufacturing production as well as export." In fact, it adds, "The share of labour-intensive manufacturing activities in manufacturing value-added (MVA) fell from 23 per cent in 2000 to 20 per cent in 2008."

Such mediocre performance is bad news for Africa's long-term prospects, the report says. It argues that recent research shows that building a strong industrial sector – with manufacturing at its core – is vital for economic development. "The manufacturing sector is the component of industry that presents greater opportunities for sustained growth, employment and poverty reduction in Africa," the report affirms.

African countries remain committed to promoting industrial development. What they now need, argues the report, is a "practical, well-designed approach to industrialization." That should entail preserving and developing Africa's agriculture, a "major source of revenue, employment and foreign exchange earnings."

Available online at:
http://gg.gg/e5NGen

Appointments

José Graziano da Silva of Brazil has been elected the new director-general of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). Since 2006, he has served as FAO assistant director-general and regional representative for Latin America and the Caribbean. He succeeds Jacques Diouf of Senegal.

The UN Secretary-General has appointed **Margaret Vogt** of Nigeria as his special representative and head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA). At the time of her appointment, Ms. Vogt served as deputy director of the Africa I Division in the UN Department of Political Affairs. She previously served the UN in Somalia, was director of the Africa Programme of the International Peace Academy and taught at the Nigerian Institute of International Affairs.

The Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) selected **Christine Lagarde** of France to serve as the Fund's managing director for a five-year term starting on 5 July 2011. Ms. Lagarde, who succeeds Mr. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, is the first woman named to the top IMF post since the institution's inception in 1944. She had served as France's minister of finance since June 2007, and prior to that was minister for foreign trade.

Sahle-Work Zewde of Ethiopia has been named by the Secretary-General as director-general of the UN Office at Nairobi (UNON), at the level of under-secretary-general. At the time of her appointment she headed the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic.

Koji Sekimizu of Japan has been elected as the secretary-general of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). Mr. Sekimizu, who has been with the IMO Secretariat since 1989, was previously the director of its Maritime Safety Division.

The UN Secretary-General has appointed **Hilde Johnson** of Norway as his special representative and head of the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS). Previously, as the deputy executive director of the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), she led the agency's humanitarian operations, crisis response and post-crisis transition programmes. From 1993 to 2005, Ms. Johnson was a member of Norway's parliament and a cabinet minister for seven years.

Abou Moussa of Chad has been appointed as special representative and head of the UN Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), based in Libreville, Gabon. UNOCA was established on 1 January 2011. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Moussa served as the *UN's principal deputy special representative in Côte d'Ivoire*. He previously worked in various postings with the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

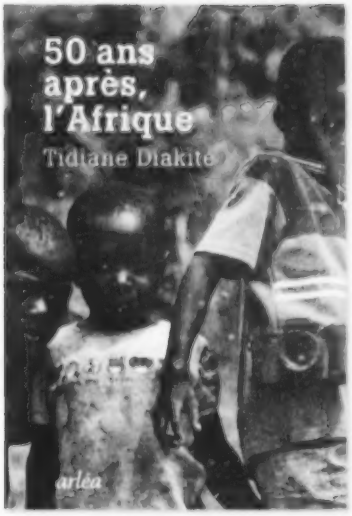
Africa Books

BOOK REVIEW

50 ans après, l'Afrique

by Tidiane Diakité. (Arléa, Paris, France, 2011, 110 pp, €12)

Africa, a puzzling paradox. Why is it that a continent with such an abundance of natural resources harbours the poorest people on the planet? In his book *50 ans après, l'Afrique* ("50 years later, Africa"), Malian history professor Tidiane Diakité analyzes the state of the continent a half century since its decolonization. Diakité addresses the obvious question that has been haunting Africa's development for decades. He starts by noting that the slave trade and colonial subjugation of Africa's people diverted the continent from its original historical trajectory and turned the African identity into that of an "outcast." Yet in order to claim their rightful place in the game of globalization, Africans need to understand its rules rather than lament the outcome of centuries of disgrace.



In his attempt to shed some light on the popular debates over Africa's slow pace of development, Prof. Diakité examines the common issues known to have set back Africa's advancement. From the evidence of corruption to the lack of democracy and the misuse of aid, he provides the reader with fine lessons on the continent's mishaps, backed up by historical facts. His analysis of the major hindrances to the development of most sub-Saharan countries is concise and precise — but not innovative. The situation is bad, we know. The question is: What do we do about it?

The final two chapters reflect on the future of the continent. Prof. Diakité identifies a number of solutions Africa, he argues, needs to shed its past image and concentrate on re-evaluating the role of the state and its leaders, emphasizing youth education, encouraging foreign investment and so on. Such obvious solutions have been acknowledged by many, but implemented by few. Prof. Diakité paints an accurate and comprehensible picture, yet breaks little new ground.

— Rebecca Moudio

Catching Up: What LDCs Can Do, and How Others Can Help by Paul Collier (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK, 2011; 86 pp; pb £15.00, e-book £12.00)

Live from Dar es Salaam: Popular Music and Tanzania's Music Economy by Alex Perullo (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, Indiana, USA, 2011; 376 pp; pb $27.95)

La Mauritanie entre le pouvoir civil et le pouvoir militaire by Mohamed Lemine Ould Meymoun (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 246 pp; pb €24.50)

Chocolate Nations: Living and Dying for Cocoa in West Africa by Orla Ryan (Zed Books, London, UK, 2011; 176 pp; pb £12.99)

African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice by Garth A. Myers (Zed Books, London, UK, 2011; 224 pp; pb £18.99)

Fighting for Darfur: Public Action and the Struggle to Stop Genocide by Rebecca Hamilton (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, New York, USA, 2011; 272 pp; $26.00)

Remaking Rwanda: State Building and Human Rights after Mass Violence, eds. Scott Straus and Lars Waldorf (University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, Wisconsin, USA, 2011; 320 pp; pb $26.95, e-book $16.95)

African Security and the African Command: Viewpoints on the US Role in Africa, eds. Terry Buss et al (Kumarian Press, Sterling, Virginia, US, 2011; 288 pp; pb $27.95, e-book $22.36)

Contesting Global Order: Development, Global Governance and Globalization by James H. Mittelman (Routledge, New York, New York, US, 2011; 304 pp; pb $39.95)

L'ethique du bien commun en Afrique. Regards croisés by Xavier Dijon and Marcus Ndongmo (L'Harmattan, Paris, France ; 2011; 212 pp ; pb €20.50)

Indépendances africaines : chroniques d'une relation by Olivier Barlet (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 248 pp; pb €22)

I Am Because We Are: African Wisdom in Image and Proverb by Joanne Veal Gabbin, Betty Press, Annetta Miller, Alison Nordström, Christiana Chinwe Okechukwu (Betty Press, Hattiesburg, Mississippi, USA, 2011; 184 pp; hb $39.95)

Oil and Insurgency in the Niger Delta: Managing the Complex Politics of Petroviolence, eds. Cyril Obi and Siri Aas Rustad (Zed Books, London, UK, 2011; 288 pp; pb £21.99)

Les Chinois à la conquête de l'Afrique by Jean Jolly (Pygmalion, Paris, France, 2011; 327 pp; pb €22.90)

Here the People Rule: Political Transition and Challenges for Democratic Consolidation in Africa by John W. Forje (Nova Science Publishers, New York, New York, USA, 2011; 216 pp; pb $43)

Civil Society and International Governance: The Role of Non-state Actors in the EU, Africa, Asia and Middle East, eds. David Armstrong et al (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, Abingdon, Oxon, UK, 2010; 224 pp; hb $125)

L'avenir du Partenariat Chine Afrique by Karima Belkacem and Lotfi Ouled Ben Hafsia (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 114 pp; pb €12)

Madagascar dans une crise interminable by Toavina Ralambomahay (L'Harmattan, Paris, France, 2011; 138 pp; pb €13.50)

Ethnicity, Citizenship and State in Eastern Africa by Aquiline Tarimo (Langaa Research and Publishing, Bamenda, Cameroon, 2011; 216 pp ; pb £18.95)

N'émigrez pas! L'Europe est un mythe by Omar Ba (Jean-Claude Gawsewitch Éditeur, Paris, France, 2010; 256 pp; pb €18.90)

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